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How England Averted a Revolution of Force

B. O. FLOWER

94.081

1881



*HOW ENGLAND AVERTED A
REVOLUTION OF FORCE*

How England Averted a Revolution of Force

A Survey of the Social Agitation
of the First Ten Years of
Queen Victoria's
Reign

BY B. O. FLOWER

*Author of "The Century of Sir Thomas More," "Gerald Massey," "Whittier:
Prophet, Seer, and Man," "Civilization's Inferno," "The
New Time," "Persons, Places, and Ideas," etc.*



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PREFACE

THE founders of our government entered upon a bold experiment. With a superb faith in human nature and with a daring that have alarmed the royalty and aristocracy and have inspired the masses of Europe ever since, they established a State which at that time was the nearest approach to a government of the people, by the people, and for the people that civilization had known. For many years it was the glory of the New World that it was a leader on the highway of progress—not a camp-follower among the nations. The republic possessed the faith, the confidence, and the determination of youth; and for nearly a century it was the hope of the downtrodden everywhere, the ideal of the truest statesmen the world over.

Our fathers laid the foundations of our government with wisdom. They met the demands of society in their day in a comprehensive and satisfying way. Far more than this they did: In the Declaration of Independence they took issue boldly with the old theories of government and enunciated

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the fundamental and vital truths for which free government must stand, while they sought to bulwark the principles of the Declaration, and to preserve, against dangers that might come before the republic became a great established fact, the ideals for which the bravest sons of the New World had cheerfully laid down their lives.

So long as the nation remained free and independent ; so long as it insisted upon doing what was right, and upon being faithful to the ideal of the fathers ; so long as it dared evince the same faith in the people that Washington and Jefferson had evinced, the republic moved forward with stately and commanding tread.

In Europe the example set by the United States took firm hold on the popular imagination ; while in the New World Toussaint L'Ouverture, the greatest of black men, and Simon Bolivar and San Martin, the noble Spanish Creole leaders, became the Washingtons respectively of Hayti and of the Spanish-American states, and republic upon republic rose on the ashes of despotic rule.

After our Civil War the spirit of timid conventionalism began to manifest itself in the republic. This spirit was not very marked at first, but year by year statesmen, the press and, to a great degree, the nation began to lose something of the old robust independ-

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ence and fearlessness. As a people we began to lose the faculty of taking the initiative. We began to look backward and overseas. We grew to demand precedents. Whenever, in order to preserve free government of, by, and for the people, any new proposal was made to meet new emergencies and new conditions, instead of demanding whether it were just and right, whether it were in accord with the fundamental demand of equal opportunities for all and special privileges for none, and whether it would secure the happiness and prosperity of the whole people, statesmen and the press were sure to ask if the proposed measure had ever been tried in the Old World, or where and at what time in the past it had been successfully introduced elsewhere; and if no satisfactory answer to this question were forthcoming, the measure was almost certain to be adjudged dangerous.

Thus to-day we are brought face to face with the melancholy spectacle of that republic which was once the glorious representative of free government, the bold initiator, the leader of Liberty's hosts, falling behind monarchies and other foreign states in the march of progress. While, for example, Switzerland long since successfully introduced the initiative, the referendum, and the imperative mandate; while England has for years enjoyed a wise and

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salutary income-and-inheritance tax ; while France, Belgium, Great Britain and other European countries have carried into wonderfully successful operation the postal savings-banks ; while government ownership of telegraphs and of railways has proved a blessing to many peoples ; while municipal ownership of natural monopolies, popular parcel-delivery, and numerous other salutary reforms have been successfully introduced across the Atlantic, and while New Zealand has made great strides toward furthering the happiness and prosperity of every citizen (reforms that include government ownership of natural monopolies, compulsory arbitration, and old-age pensions),—while all this has been done elsewhere, the republic has halted when measures have been demanded of her which were wholly in harmony with the spirit that dominated the nation at its birth.

To-day we are confronting new conditions that make stern demands upon the statesmanship, upon the wisdom, and upon the conscience of the nation. The century just closed witnessed so many and so marvelous changes that it is no exaggeration to say we have been and indeed are still living in what is, in a more modern and an additional sense, a new world. Science, discovery, and invention have wrought wonders that even the most daring imagi-

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nation a hundred years ago could not have conceived of as possible ; and this changed order has affected life in all its ramifications.

It becomes necessary, therefore, to meet at points the new requirements with new measures, which, though they may be innovations, shall still keep society true to the spirit of free government ; for, though the world of our fathers has passed away, the truths and the principles they enunciated remain, being grounded in the very nature of things, and so immortal.

The demand to-day as in the beginning of the republic is for equal rights, and justice, for all—for the poorest, for the lowliest, and for the weakest, no less than for the richest, the most cultured, and the strongest—and for conditions that shall favor the growth and development of the highest side of man's nature.

I believe that society has reached a stage when, sooner or later, the rights of the people will be successfully asserted ; but I am of the number of those who desire to see the ends of justice reached by peaceful and orderly means, and since we have grown to depend so much upon precedent, it has occurred to me that possibly the presentation of the story of the Anti-Corn-Law movement may at this time prove helpful. Here we have a very sugges-

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tive precedent—a great popular reform successfully accomplished in a form of society not essentially dissimilar from our own, and under general conditions much the same.

At the time of the Corn-Law agitation the industrial and social situation in England was very like the industrial and social situation confronting us to-day. There were the great body of the nation on the one hand, and a numerically small but very influential, rich and powerful class on the other; the landed aristocracy, controlling as it did the government and almost all the opinion-forming influences, appeared to be invincible, while the people were sinking lower and lower in the conflict. But the popular cause was just; it was fortunate in attracting to itself skilful and devoted leaders, and in a comparatively short time it *won*.

What was accomplished in the 'forties of the last century can be achieved again in the early years of the century now opening. On reading the story of the Anti-Corn-Law movement, by simply changing the names of the actors and of the places and the name of the end sought, one easily fancies he is reading our own story to-day. Then as now those representing legally-protected class-interests, and who through special privileges were becoming

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immensely rich at the expense of the masses, were arrogant and defiant. Then as with us those enjoying monopoly rights and class-privileges, with their advocates, began by downright denial of the facts; when this became no longer possible, they offered belated excuses for them, and after that a number of ingenious or far-fetched plans for the improvement of existing conditions,—all, of course, falling far short of the one great radical measure that would make such conditions thereafter impossible.

The important fact to be noted in this movement, so like that going on in our own midst to-day, is that *victory came to the reformers*. As the conservative parties are essentially the same in both periods, so surely—if we adopt the same educational methods as did the Corn-Law reformers, if we practice their wisdom, their unity, their persistency, lose no chances, and are prompt as the English agitators were to seize the opportunity when it shall arrive—the result too shall be the same now as then. We were not afraid to take the initiative in 1776; Englishmen, under the leadership of Cobden and of Bright, were not afraid to take it in 1839. Shall we fear now? The story of the Anti-Corn-Law crusade and of its victorious outcome points the way for peaceable and progressive measures

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that shall insure free government for our posterity,
and a larger meed of justice, of prosperity and of
happiness for all the people than has yet been
known in history.

B. O. FLOWER.

BOSTON, Massachusetts, July, 1903.

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*HOW ENGLAND AVERTED A
REVOLUTION OF FORCE*

HOW ENGLAND AVERTED A REVOLUTION OF FORCE

INTRODUCTION

IMPORTANCE AND TIMELINESS OF THE SUBJECT

Birth of English Democracy—The Monarchical Form clothing a Republican Spirit—Two Typical Revolutions—Transition-period between the Old England and the New—Difficulties to be Met—Social Discontent.

TO FRIENDS of popular government there has seldom been a decade of greater interest, or one more instructive in its practical lessons, than were the first ten years of Queen Victoria's reign; for during this period the spirit of progressive democracy was introduced into the political life of Great Britain to such an extent that it changed the genius or character of the government. True, the new spirit was present when the great Reform Bill of 1831-'32 was passed; but personal government could not be said to have given

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place to constitutional rule during the reign of William IV. Victoria, however, accepted the spirit as well as the letter of the new demand born of the democratic ideal that was to be progressively and practically applied to public affairs. Hence the beginning of her rule marked the advent of the republican temper which has been fostered and expanded with the succeeding years.

History has afforded many sad illustrations of republican shells masking imperial despotism or intolerable tyrannies, under autocratic or oligarchical rule; but in England we find the form and paraphernalia of monarchy clothing a government which, since the dawn of the Victorian age, has successively enlarged the rights and privileges of the people, and which has from year to year, in its internal policy and in that of its Anglo-Saxon dependencies, accepted the larger demand of a free government whose face is set toward the republican ideal. For this reason a brief survey of the period will prove helpful and, I think, inspiring to those who are earnestly working for freedom, for fraternity, and for happiness based on justice and enlightenment.

The condition and general outlook in England during the first years of Queen Victoria's reign was in so many respects analogous to that present in France when Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette

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ascended the throne, that the happy outcome in Great Britain stands in bold and brilliant relief against the dark background of the wanton slaughter of life and the destruction of property that marked the Reign of Terror. In each country the transition was revolutionary, working changes of a fundamental and far-reaching character. In France, all the savage and brutal instincts of millions were unleashed, the result being a drama of unparalleled ferocity, in which reason, justice, love and the humanitarian impulses were banished to enthrone hate and to glut revenge. In England, on the other hand, a revolution scarcely less fundamental, but slower in its processes, was carried to a victorious issue by peaceable measures, primarily through the unrelenting and indefatigable labors of a little band of social reformers who fully understood the meaning and importance of the two words, *organization* and *education*; and secondarily by the presence of high moral purpose and of far-seeing, courageous and incorruptible statesmanship, unhampered by the throne.

The first decade of the Victorian age was, to use the language of Dr. Charles Mackay, "a transition period from the old England to the new. The slow civilization of our grandfathers was giving place to the far more active, prying, aggressive civilization

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of the present day—the day of steam, electricity, and engineering, and of material rather than intellectual or moral progress.”* Moreover, the difficulties and obstacles, at home and abroad, that confronted the State were of the gravest character. In Canada revolution, in Jamaica threatened revolt, in India the rising mutterings of a coming storm were enough to tax the wisdom of far greater statesmen than easy-going Melbourne and his associates. But, serious as were these dangers, they sank into comparative insignificance before the rising flood of social discontent which, swelled as it was by many different tributaries, threatened to sweep away the old régime with the fury that had marked the great continental revolution.†

* Charles Mackay, LL.D., “Forty Years’ Recollections,” vol. I., p. 77.

† “It is easy to imagine a succession of events,” says Justin McCarthy, “which might have thrown the country into utter confusion. . . . Things were looking ominous for the new reign. The last two reigns had done much to loosen not only the personal feeling of allegiance, but even the general confidence in the virtue of monarchical rule. . . . Social discontent prevailed almost everywhere. . . . Class-interests were fiercely arrayed against each other. The cause of each man’s class filled him with positive fanaticism.” (“History of Our Own Times,” Am. ed., vol. I., p. 16.)

CHAPTER I.

SOME LEADING CAUSES OF THE POPULAR UNREST

The American Republic—Effect of the French Revolution—Passage from Absolute to Constitutional Monarchy—Spirit of the Age—Physical Science—Philosophical and Religious Thought—The Oxford Movement—"No Popery"—Disappointment at Results of Reform Bill—Lord Durham—The New Poor Law—Machinery—Condition of the Poor—"The Cry of the People."

TO APPRECIATE intelligently the difficulties that the statesmanship of the 'forties of the nineteenth century had to meet, it will be necessary for us to recall to mind some of the leading sources of this popular discontent. The fifty years that preceded the coronation of the Queen had revolutionized the thought of Europe. The vigorous young republic over the water, in spite of the gloomy predictions that had been confidently and persistently made in regard to her for half a century, had moved forward with stately and uninterrupted tread, till she occupied a commanding position among the positive and inspiring powers

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of civilization. Men of the Old World had become convinced that the daring ideals of the new order were practicable. The republic was "a great fact"; and its success had excited the wonder of the world, and the admiration of the friends of freedom in all lands.

The French Revolution, through its excesses and the failure of the experiment, had caused a revulsion in public feeling; but, in spite of this, the upheaval had shaken every throne in western Europe, and planted a great new hope in the hearts of millions of people. Moreover, the broadly humanitarian and philosophical controversies and intellectual agitations that preceded and followed the Revolution had appealed to the conscience, to the rationality, and to the sense of justice of more than one great English statesman, while they produced a profound and indelible impression upon the great middle class of the nation.

Another factor that strengthened the revolutionary impulses was the new-born confidence on the part of the masses in their own power, when once banded together. The starving miseries of France, when acting in concert, had proved irresistible against even the Bastille and the throne. This salient fact had taken lodgment in the minds of tens of thousands of the very poor, who seemed to be too ignorant to

Some Causes of the Popular Unrest

appreciate the higher motives that actuated those who were fighting the battle of progress from a love of justice; and this realization of the possibility of victory made them far less patient than they had been before the upheaval in France.

At this time all western continental Europe was fast moving toward a revolutionary outbreak, and England had become infected with the spirit of revolt. Then, again, during the last two reigns the nation had passed from a personal monarchy to a constitutional form of government; and the vanishing of the old reverence that had hedged the throne was noticeable in every class, though it was perhaps nowhere so conspicuous as among the very poor, whose lot was pitiable in the extreme.

The tendency to revolt was favored by the general temper of the age. It was a time when the thought of the nation was in a state of flux. The old views were rapidly falling away. Ancient theories were being questioned, when indeed they were not impatiently discarded. The old ideals were giving place to new ones more in harmony with the larger thought that had come with the larger life of the age. It was as if the word *change* were graven over every gateway of research. In science, in religion, in commerce and trade, no less than in political and social economy, there was a degree of restlessness that

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always marks a time of growth and transition, and which gives impetus to revolutionary impulses. In the epigrammatic phrase of Lord Brougham, "The schoolmaster was abroad in the land."

The value of steam and the wonders and uses of electricity were new to the nation; and these discoveries were stimulating the brain of thousands of inventive geniuses, while they opened new worlds of possibility to the mercantile and trading classes.

Physical science was also girding herself for the most brilliant march of discovery in the history of the ages—a march in which Great Britain was to take a leading part. Charles Darwin had returned from his memorable voyage round the world in "The Beagle," and, with brain teeming with new and wonderful thought born of his research, was busily engaged in the production of his immortal works; while Alfred Russell Wallace, Herbert Spencer, John Tyndall and others who were to make the nineteenth century forever glorious in the history of scientific progress, were in the flush of early manhood.

In the domain of religion the revolutionary impulses were very marked. The rise of physical science, with the startling new theories of evolution; the innovations of investigators in natural history, in geology, in astronomy, and indeed in all depart-

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ments of scientific research ; the general quickening of the spirit of unrest and skepticism ; the spread of German transcendentalism, and the dissemination of the philosophical French liberalism, were influencing the thought of England. Perhaps this was nowhere more apparent than in the broadening vision of great divines and churchmen. But this invasion of the precincts of the church by the newer thought and speculation, while it wove a fascinating spell over many of the noblest thinkers, naturally produced a powerful reaction in the minds of others no less able or conscientious, who saw with the gravest apprehension the fading away of the old reverence for form, for rite, for ritual, and for dogma. To them it seemed that the church, loosed from her moorings, was floating into a sea of skepticism. In 1833 the famous Oxford Movement was launched by John Henry Newman and other able and intensely religious men. They were reactionists who, unconsciously at first, had set their face toward Rome. In 1841 Dr. Newman issued his famous "Tract No. 90," which occasioned such heated controversy that it might almost be said to have convulsed the councils of the Established Church. To the clear-seeing it was evident that the keen thinker and masterly logician, its author, was already under the fascination of the great Latin

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church; and his formal acceptance of Catholicism, in 1845, surprised no one.

The years that followed the Oxford Movement were marked by a religious upheaval which shook the Church of England as it had not been moved in generations. The controversies were between intellectual giants, who were also men of pure motives and noble impulses; in the strenuous conflict life-long friends were arrayed against each other, teachers against disciples, and brother against brother. A striking instance of this was seen in the case of the Newman brothers. We have seen how the new thought and larger views of life that busied the brain of the period filled the mystical and contemplative divine, John Henry Newman, with alarm, and drove him into the arms of Rome. The same influences, playing upon the more rationalistic mind of Francis Newman, fascinated him with the broader outlook and led him into the ranks of Liberalism.*

* These brothers were equally pure in heart and purpose, equally sincere and earnest. Both were passionate lovers of truth. Each was logical and endowed with keen intellectual perception. But with the one the mystical and poetic quality, with the other the rationalistic, seemed to hold supremacy. In the Newman brothers we have one of the most suggestive illustrations of how the same influences will produce diametrically opposite impressions on two elevated, truth-loving natures. Their lives also show something of the play of forces at work in the church at this period. We can easily understand how the scholarship of England was moved by the keen and often bitter controversy, and how something of the old-time prejudice flamed up in the minds of some of her noblest churchmen.

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The effect upon the popular mind of this movement toward the Church of Rome by a few of the brightest lights of the English church was insignificant, as compared with the general alarm and prejudice excited by another agitation, largely without substantial basis, which was professedly religious, but was in reality carried on chiefly for political ends. The old cry of "No Popery!" was used as a slogan by demagogues, and the fact that O'Connell and his colleagues were acting with Lord Melbourne was seized on by the Opposition to excite the religious prejudices of the sentimental and the timid to the dangerous pass where judgment and reason become clouded, if they do not even give place to insane hate. The spirit of religious intolerance and bigotry ever sleeps lightly in the heart of a people that holds with grim tenacity to a dogmatic theology; and to us of the present day it seems almost incredible that eminent men, who represented that element of society which prided itself on its conservatism and respectability, should have gone to such lengths as did the Tories in an attempt to unleash the religious fanaticism of the people.

A great cry was raised by the Conservatives at the danger that threatened England from the immaturity of the Queen, and from the friendliness shown by the ministry to Daniel O'Connell and other Irish-

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Catholic members of the House. For a time there seemed to be a systematic and determined attempt to create the impression that there was grave danger of the Queen throwing her influence in favor of "Popery," as the Conservatives were pleased to term Catholicism.

Many intimations were indulged in to the effect that an effort was being made to wed the youthful sovereign to a Catholic prince. It is an old and favorite device of politicians who are governed by motives other than the highest, to assume as a fact something derogatory to the Opposition, and then to argue on the false assumption as if it were sound. At this time demagogues were quick to employ this discreditable method to injure the ministry by further inflaming the religious passions of the people.

Even the staid old *London Times* insisted that "the anticipations of certain Irish Roman Catholics respecting the success of their warfare against church and state under the auspices of these not untried ministers into whose hands the all but infant Queen has been compelled by her unhappy condition to deliver herself and her indignant people are to be taken for nothing, and as nothing, but the chimeras of a band of visionary traitors."

It is a law of life that like calls forth like, and

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the Liberals were not slow in retaliating. Charges of meditated treason and dark hints of designs upon the throne were freely and unjustifiably indulged in. Mr. Henry Grattan, the son of the great orator, in a public address said: "If her Majesty were once fairly placed in the hands of the Tories, I would not give an orange peel for her life." And in order to give further emphasis to his absurd and extraordinary imputation, he added: "If some of the low miscreants of the party got round her Majesty and had the mixing of the royal bowl at night, I fear she would have a long sleep."

While it is obvious that this agitation was due chiefly to political demagoguery, it cannot be denied that the trouble was constantly fed by indiscreet and indefensible utterances and actions on the part both of Catholics and of Protestants, chiefly in Ireland, though to some extent in England also.*

* It was during the early years of Queen Victoria's reign, when the Corn-Law agitators and the anti-Papal zealots were active, that Thomas Moore voiced the sentiments of thousands of Englishmen in a little waif, two stanzas of which run as follows :

"What, still those two infernal questions,
That with our meals, our slumber mix!
That spoil our tempers and digestions,
Eternal Corn and Catholics!

"Gods! were there ever two such bores!
Nothing else talked of night or morn,
Nothing *in* doors, or *out* of doors,
But endless Catholics and Corn!"

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It is thus quite clear that the general spirit of the time was one of widespread unrest. But, passing from a general survey to a closer scrutiny of the political, of the social, and of the economic conditions, we see everywhere indications of a great storm brewing.*

The profound agitation that had convulsed England during the long, memorable and bitterly contested Reform-Bill struggle, had interested as no agitation had ever done before the masses of the English people in political measures; and, as is always the case when some distinctively progressive step is taken, the bill had aroused extravagant and unwarranted expectations in the minds of thousands of the slow-thinking toilers. There of course had followed in this class bitter disappointment, while even the more discerning and discriminating among progressive Englishmen, who regarded the measure

* The mistakes of the Conservatives had exerted a strong influence upon the public mind. This had been very noticeable in the popular reaction that followed the persistent attempt of the Duke of Wellington, in 1830, when at the head of the ministry, to destroy the freedom of the press by rigorous persecution (see "History of the English Parliament," vol. XIII.). Although this dangerous attempt of the crown and its ministers came practically to an end in 1831 with the failure of the Whig attorney-general to convict Cobbett, the effort had served to arouse the more thoughtful and patriotic among the people to the importance not only of boldly resisting the attempts to suppress the freedom of the press, but also of uniting in a demand for larger freedom and a wider meed of justice.

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merely as the opening wedge (as indeed it proved to be) to greater and more essential reforms, were disappointed on finding that the Liberal or Whig party had no intention of involving the country in further agitation by taking the "next step."

The laboring classes were enraged by the refusal of the Liberal ministry to extend the franchise, or to adopt other measures that it was believed would better the pitiable condition of workingmen. They had worked hard for the success of the Reform Bill. Indeed, the measure would never have become a law had it not been for the artisan class. Royalty and the aristocracy yielded only after it had become clear that revolution would inevitably follow if they persisted in their opposition. The gigantic demonstrations of revolt in England, in 1831, after the Lords had refused to pass the measure, revealed to the Conservatives the ugly fact that "if constitutional means failed the bill would be carried by unconstitutional pressure."* None knew better than did the workingmen that the success of the Reform Bill had been made possible by their persistent, determined and united action; and they now felt that, in common fairness, the demands of the artisan class should receive consideration at the hands of those whom they had helped, who had promised to

* J. Franck Bright, D.D., "History of England," vol. III., p. 1426.

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be and who they had supposed were their friends.

In spite however of the indignation of the laboring classes, and of the angry cry of the starving in the great cities, the Liberals refused to advance. Lord Melbourne and Lord Russell seemed to think that, after the passage of the Reform Bill, the people should rest content for a generation, while the ministry enjoyed the emoluments and honors of office undisturbed—as a reward for what they had done.

Lord Durham, it is true, wished to move forward. He was a great statesman, with all his faults; in many respects, one of the most commanding and influential figures of the stormy days before the Reform Bill became a law. In fact, its success was in no small degree due to his indefatigable labors. Had he had his way, the bill would have been far more radical and republican in spirit and in character. He was the most advanced member of Lord Grey's illustrious cabinet, and was long regarded as the hope of the progressive reformers. He was brave, bold, imperious, often passionate in his outbursts when he felt that custom, law, or man's selfishness was retarding justice, or blocking progress.

But Lord Durham was not to be the chosen leader who should guide the English nation forward

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into a broader and happier estate. A short time after the accession of the Queen, he was sent to Canada to quell the rebellion which had broken out in that province. Here he set out, as some one has observed, "to make or mar a career, if not a country." But an evil fate pursued him. He builded wisely ; he wrought great things ; yet in so doing he ruined himself.*

Lord Durham, however, was far too radical to suit the majority of the Whigs. Indeed, the Melbourne cabinet, which first essayed to guide the fortunes of England under Victoria, was almost as indifferent to the wrongs of the poor as the Tories were solicitous for the preservation and protection of the ancient privileges and vested rights of the landed gentry. Hence throughout the kingdom the rising tide of angry discontent, which had

* Mr. McCarthy admirably characterizes Lord Durham's labors and their results in the following passage :

"Lord Durham made a country and he marred a career. He is distinctly the founder of the system which has since worked with such gratifying success in Canada ; he is the founder even of the principle which allowed the quiet development of the provinces into a confederation with neighbouring colonies under the name of the Dominion of Canada. But the singular quality which in home politics had helped to mar so much of Lord Durham's personal career was in full work during his visit to Canada. It would not be easy to find in modern political history so curious an example of splendid success combined with all the appearance of utter and disastrous failure. The mission of Lord Durham saved Canada. It ruined Lord Durham." ("History of Our Own Times," Am. ed., vol. I., p. 43.)

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rapidly increased during the latter half of William's reign, swelled ominously as the terrible distress of the working classes in the great cities grew during the opening years of Victoria's rule.

The Liberals had further incensed the very poor by the enactment, in 1833, of a new poor law, which abolished outdoor relief and established workhouses for the reception of the starving. By this law, husbands and wives demanding assistance were not only compelled to work (which in the large majority of cases they were quite willing to do), but they were separated, in order that society should not be burdened by additional expense due to any more children born; while the little ones who had already come into the world were taken from their parents. We can easily understand how extremely brutal this statute appeared to be to hundreds of thousands of the very poor, whose lives had been spent in a tragic battle for bread, and whose only joy in existence lay under the little roof that sheltered husband, wife and children. The condition of tens of thousands of the working people was so precarious that none knew when he might be forced to ask for bread; and to know that that asking would be met by the demand for the breaking-up of the home and the incarceration of its inmates in workhouses produced the most bitter resentment, and led to many riots.

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For generations a large proportion of the working people had lived in constant fear of starvation and the potter's field. Thousands rarely, if ever, enjoyed a full meal. During the reform agitation they had been led to hope for better things, and instead of the expected loaf the Liberals had given them a stone in the form of the new poor bill.

Another cause of apprehension and discontent among the poor was found in the rapid introduction of machinery, which had already begun to displace thousands of workers. So long as the toilers had felt that the employers were compelled to make use of their services, they had had something to hope for in the way of work ; but as machine after machine was introduced, each of which performed the labor of a number of workers, a feeling akin to despair took possession of a large proportion of the artisan class and goaded them to many acts of violence, such as breaking up the machinery, and in other ways seeking to wreak vengeance on the employers who, they felt, were attempting to deprive them of the miserable pittance necessary to keep them from the poorhouse.

It was this rebellious spirit, born of a sense of injustice, on the part of tens of thousands of English laborers, and the dreadful suffering from overwork and under-pay, which prevailed at this time,

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that made the outlook peculiarly dark. In all the great cities there were thousands of persons in a state of chronic hunger. The opening winter of Victoria's reign proved extremely severe,—a fact that of course greatly augmented the sufferings of the “out-of-works.” From this time forth till the repeal of the Corn Laws, the ominous specter of Revolution rose threateningly and in increasing proportions against the political sky of Great Britain.

To appreciate properly the grievances of the poor let us glance for a moment at their condition. In the mining regions, for example, the revelations brought out by a parliamentary investigation secured by Lord Ashley seem to us at the present day almost beyond belief, and are enough to excite horror in the mind of the most easy-going conventionalist.

It was shown by the report of the investigation that in some of the coal mines in England, in Scotland, and in Wales children only four years of age were set at work, while in most of the collieries boys and girls on reaching five and six years were put to laborious tasks. These children, and also women, were made to do all the work of burden-bearing beasts. In many places “the coal-seams were not more than twenty-two to twenty-eight

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inches in height, the heat was intense, water was constantly dripping, frequently it lay deep over the feet and lower limbs of the workers. Along these terrible passages, for a hundred or two hundred yards in length, between the working-places, the children and women had to crawl along on all fours, with a girdle passing round their waists, and harnessed by a chain between their legs to the carts they were drawing.”*

The testimony elicited from the workers by the investigating committee was almost past belief. Thus, for example, one poor woman said: “I have been in water up to my thighs; I go on my hands and feet; the road is very steep; when there is no rope we have to catch hold of anything we can; my clothes are wet through all day long; I have drawn till I have had the skin off me.”

One of the commissioners said: “I found a little girl, six years of age, carrying half a cwt., and making regularly fourteen long journeys a day. The height ascended, and the distance along the road, exceeded in each journey the height of St. Paul’s Cathedral.” The children used to work on alternate days, but their working day was from sixteen to twenty-four hours. “I have repeatedly worked,” said a girl of seventeen years of age, “for twenty-four hours.”

* J. Franck Bright, D.D., “History of England,” vol. IV., p. 89.

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The general working day was from fourteen to sixteen hours. It was further shown that the men in the mines were absolutely naked, and that the only clothing worn by the women was a pair of trousers made of coarse sacking. Under these circumstances, it is not to be wondered at that decency and modesty gave way to such revolting moral conditions that the imagination shrinks in horror from their contemplation, or that all hope, joy and aspiration had abandoned the lives of these slaves of a tragic fate and victims of man's inhumanity.

The revelation of abuses of child-labor in the factories, also brought about by the laudable efforts of Lord Ashley, were only less disgraceful than were those called forth by his commission in its investigation of the collieries.

In the villages and rural districts, as well as in the great cities, there was widespread misery among the poor; but the suffering was most acute in the manufacturing centers. The noble-minded poet, Thomas Cooper, has related many typical instances that help us to understand the feeling of the poor. On one occasion he says that a needy stockinger rushed into his house exclaiming: "I wish they would hang me. I have lived on cold potatoes that were given me these two days, and this morning I've eaten a raw potato for sheer hunger." On another occasion,

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when an address was being delivered by one of the Chartists, a poor man exclaimed: "Let us be patient a little longer, surely God Almighty will help us soon." "Talk to us no more about thy Goddle Mighty," was the prompt retort; "there is n't one! If there was one, He would n't let us suffer as we do!"

The pitiable condition of the poor, which was so painfully apparent in all the humbler walks of life, called forth many impassioned and some seemingly intemperate appeals from a number of the finest and most sensitive exponents of the conscience of England. But I know of no descriptive lines that more simply, yet faithfully, portray the temper and feeling of the great growing army of discontented toilers than do the following stanzas from Dr. Charles Mackay's poem entitled "The Cry of the People":

"Our backs are bowed with the exceeding weight
Of toil and sorrow, and our pallid faces
Shrivel before their time. Early and late
We labour in our old accustom'd places,
Beside our close and melancholy looms,
Or wither in the coal-seams dark and dreary,
Or breathe sick vapours in o'ercrowded rooms,
Or in the healthier fields dig till we weary,
And grow old men ere we have reach'd our prime,
With scarce a wish, but death, to ask of Time.

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“For it is hard to labour night and day,
With sleep-defrauded eyes and temples aching,
To earn the scanty crust, which fails to stay
The hunger of our little ones, that waking
Weep for their daily bread. 'Tis hard to see
The flow'rets of our household fade in sadness,
In the dank shadow of our misery.
'Tis hard to have no thought of human gladness,
But one engrossing agony for bread,
To haunt us at our toil, and in our bed.

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“'Tis hard to know that the increase of wealth
Makes us no richer, gives us no reliance ;
And that while ease, and luxury, and health
Follow the footsteps of advancing science,
They shower no benefits on us, cast out
From the fair highways of the world, to wander
In dark paths darkly groping still about,
And at each turn condemn'd to rest and ponder
If living be the only aim of life—
Mere living, purchased by perpetual strife.”

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CHAPTER II.

ORIGIN, PROGRESS, AND RESULT OF CHARTISM

Estimate of Movement—Reform Bill of 1831—Middle Classes demand Representation—Reform Necessary—Difficulties in the Way—Votes on Bill—Passage of Bill—Result of Bill—Reaction—Rise of Chartism—Its Demands—Its Spread—Conservatism of the Masses—The Reformer—Leaders of Movement—Unwise Advocates—How Chartism might have Succeeded—Indifference of Government—Opposition and Riots—A New Influence.

WE NOW come to notice the birth, growth and fate of that movement which is known in English political history as "Chartism." This movement, by virtue of its rapid spread no less than of its revolutionary and aggressive spirit, caused widespread alarm in England; it also served an excellent purpose in hastening the repeal of the Corn Laws and the enactment of salutary reform statutes that, without such stimulus, would probably have been delayed. But besides, above and beyond this, it kept so prominently before the people the larger demands of the

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age that the duties and responsibilities that a government owes to all its citizens became fixed ideas in the minds of millions of workers who, before the Reform-Bill agitation, had taken but little interest in public affairs. Moreover, it aided in no small degree in bringing the popular imagination under the influence of the spirit of democracy, thus furthering the progressive enlargement of the rights of the citizens that has been one of the distinguishing characteristics of the Victorian era.

To comprehend the aim and hope of Chartism, it will be necessary to review briefly the history of the Reform Bill of 1831-'32, and also to notice the essential features of that great measure which marked an epoch in English constitutional history; as it was largely the success of the Reform-Bill agitation that revealed to the breadwinners of England the power that, under certain conditions, they might wield in shaping legislation. The bill itself suggested the next step, which, when taken, would give also to the artisan class that substantial representation in government which they fondly believed would speedily bring about just and beneficent conditions for the poor.

At the outset, in order to appreciate the philosophical basis of Chartism, we should keep in mind the larger life that the French Revolution had sug-

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gested to the people of England, and the equally important fact that the rise of democracy on the Continent threatened not only the demolition of thrones, but also the destruction of the aristocracy. It would be difficult to exaggerate the consternation of the English aristocracy caused by the French Revolution and, later, by the victorious march of the Corsican, who, though not a republican, was nevertheless the enemy of aristocracy and the destroyer of the old order. To preserve the supremacy of aristocratic rule it was necessary to secure the general support of the middle classes. Their wealth, no less than their aid in other ways, saved England; but with peace and a huge debt incurred in prosecuting the war, the aristocracy was confronted by a new and unwelcome demand. The middle classes who had contributed so largely to the preservation of the old form of government in England, now imperiously demanded substantial representation in her halls of legislation. It soon became apparent, however, that the reform agitation had but little prospect of success without the aid of the toiling millions; and to them the middle class appealed. "It was not, however," observes Mr. Gammage, "without the promise of substantial advantages that the middle class succeeded in winning the coöperation of the masses, who were them-

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selves looking forward to an extension of political power. . . . The middle class persuaded them for a season to forego their more extensive claims, in order the more effectually to secure them ultimately. 'Aid us,' said they, 'in gaining the Reform Bill, and as soon as we are enfranchised we will make use of our power in assisting you to the attainment of your rights.' " *

On the death of George IV., which occurred on June 26, 1830, the social conditions of England were such as occasioned great uneasiness in government circles. The illiberal spirit of the Tory government under the Duke of Wellington, the increasing unpopularity of the late King, the widespread sufferings of the poor throughout country and city, the vigorous assaults of the more liberal of the Whig members of the aristocracy and of the middle classes upon the time-honored rule of the aristocracy, the rapid growth of revolutionary literature, the presence of large numbers of agitators among the poor, the frequent outbreaks of mobs in the manufacturing districts where machines were destroyed, and an epidemic of rick-burning in southern England that even the apprehension and hanging of a number of persons charged with the offence failed to check,

* R. G. Gammage, "History of the Chartist Movement," p. 3.

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were ominous signs of the times when William IV. ascended the throne.

The parliamentary election of 1830 had resulted in a substantial Liberal victory. The general demand for a radical reform in government, which should abolish the rotten boroughs and also secure for the middle class influential representation in Parliament, had been strongly emphasized in this election. Hence there was great excitement throughout the realm when Parliament assembled, on the second of November, 1830, to hear the message of the new King. Not a few expected that the Duke of Wellington would be promptly retired, and that Lord Grey, the leader of the reform wing of the Whig party, would be summoned to form a ministry.

The King, however, ignored the popular demand. The speech from the throne was a bitter disappointment to the people, being ultra-conservative in tone. The Duke of Wellington remained at the head of the cabinet; and in answer to a suggestion of Lord Grey's looking toward taking up the matter of the reform, he made the amazing statement that in his opinion the present legislative system possessed the confidence of the country, and that he was not prepared to favor any reform. The duke furthermore positively asserted that, "as long as he held any

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station in the government of the country, he should always feel it his duty to resist such measures when proposed by others."

But the Liberal party was in no mood for acquiescing in the Bourbon programme of the Conservatives, and Lord Brougham immediately gave notice that he should propose a motion for reform on the sixteenth of November. As the house was overwhelmingly Liberal, there was no question but the government would be defeated; but before the date set for the motion the Tory ministry had sent in its resignation, and Lord Grey was charged with the duty of forming a new cabinet.

The difficulties that confronted the new ministry were very great, a fact that became apparent immediately on the introduction of the Reform Bill. A large number of the seats in the House of Commons were filled by members who represented nomination or "rotten" boroughs; naturally enough, these members were indisposed to vote for a measure that contained as a cardinal provision the abolition of their seats. The Tory press denounced the proposed reforms as revolutionary; the Radicals were indignant because they were so conservative. The House of Lords was overwhelmingly opposed to the bill, and there was a general insistence on the part of the Tories that the riots and other expres-

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sions of lawlessness which had marked the recent months were due largely to the reform agitation, and that, if the demands of the reformers should once be granted, it would so encourage the poor that they would break out in a ruinous and disastrous revolution. The refusal of the Liberal ministry to adopt any especially drastic measures for suppressing the revolutionary and aggressive bodies that were forming all over England was further used to alarm capitalists and the conservative element of society by the upholders of the old régime.

“It was scarcely to be expected,” says Mr. Bright, “that of its own free will the House of Commons should accept a bill which must exclude many of its members from their seats; it was as the spokesmen of a great national wish that the ministers regarded themselves, and they intended to rely upon the nation for their support. Not only did they therefore refrain from any exceptional measures for the suppression of disturbance, they also allowed to pass unquestioned the legality of the numerous political unions which, following the example of the Union of Birmingham . . . had sprung into existence all over England, and which aimed at bringing into some sort of harmony the demands of the wealthy and poorer classes. The ministry had in fact determined to use all expressions of the national

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temper, even when verging upon breaches of the Constitution, to forward what they conceived to be the great healing measure which the evils of the times demanded. The struggle thus assumed a far more dignified form than that of an ordinary political question. In its first stage it was the people, as usual with aristocratic leaders, who demanded and insisted upon their will being heard by the Lower House. When that House had been reconstituted, and become favorable to the popular claims, it was the people speaking by the voice of their constitutionally chosen representatives, supported by an irresistible and probably unconstitutional action from without, which engaged in a life and death struggle with the aristocracy, clinging tenaciously to their ancient privileges."*

The leaders of the Radical element came early to an appreciation of the difficulties under which Lord Grey and his associates were laboring. They also realized that the work which he had set out to perform was a necessary first step to the wider representation that they hoped would shortly follow. Hence they set at work with laudable zeal to bring all the artisan class and the associations of the workers into hearty sympathy with the reform

* J. Franck Bright, D.D., "History of England," vol. III., pp. 1424-1425.

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ministry ; and the cry, " The Bill, and nothing but the Bill ! " soon rang throughout the length and breadth of the realm. " Many of the political unions," observes Mr. Bright, " came to the formal determination that, if necessary, they would refrain from paying taxes, and would even march to London ; they issued lists showing the numbers on which they could count, and it began to be plain that, if constitutional means failed, the Bill would be carried by unconstitutional pressure." *

When the matter, however, was brought to a test in the House the ministry was discredited and resigned. The King refused to accept the resignation, while still urging the ministry not to appeal to the country. Lord Grey was thus placed in an extremely embarrassing position. He did not wish to arouse the enmity of the King, who was beginning to appear favorable to the reform, while it was well-nigh impossible for him to proceed with a Parliament antagonistic to the cause for which he stood. The difficulty however was happily overcome by the ill-advised action of the Tories, who addressed an appeal to the King in which they admonished him not to dissolve Parliament. This was resented by William as an effort to dictate to the throne, and he forthwith ordered a new election. The appeal to

* *Ibid.*, p. 1426.

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the country resulted in an overwhelming victory for the Liberals.

The bill was now pushed forward in spite of the irritating tactics of the Opposition, who stubbornly contested every detail, and on the twenty-first of September, 1831, a final vote on the measure resulted in its passing the House by a majority of one hundred and nine. It was at once sent to the Peers, where it was unceremoniously thrown out by a majority of forty-one. The Commons, however, immediately passed a vote of confidence in the ministry, which prevented its resignation.

Throughout the nation the greatest indignation prevailed, and riots occurred at various points. The unions in many cities became very defiant, and plans were made for a monster meeting that clearly indicated a revolutionary outbreak. The King became greatly alarmed. The specter of the French Revolution rose before him, and he urged his ministers to take prompt action for quelling the threatened insurrection. As the hope of the Reform Bill now seemed to lie in retaining the good-will of the King, and in persuading him to create a sufficient number of peers favorable to the measure to overcome the opposition, the ministry acted in a summary manner by issuing a proclamation, on the twenty-second of November, suppressing certain political clubs.

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Again the battle had to be fought in the Commons; and on the twenty-third of March, 1832, the bill was again passed, this time by a majority of one hundred and sixteen. Its reception in the House of Lords was somewhat more civil than that which had marked its previous entrance, and for a time it seemed as if the Peers, frightened at the threat of an increase in their numbers, would yield to the clearly expressed wishes of the nation. At the last moment, however, the King was won over by the Tories and refused to entertain the proposition of creating more peers. The Conservatives had convinced him that by bold repressive and coercive measures he could better curb the rising tide of discontent than by yielding to the popular demand. The bill was rejected on the seventh of May, and Lord Grey resigned. His resignation was promptly accepted by the King and the Duke of Wellington attempted to form a conservative ministry.

But the day for coercing the English people had passed. The country was moved by an indignation greater than had been popularly manifested in many years. The papers came out in mourning. Petitions asking that no supplies be granted till the bill was passed were signed by thousands and sent to London, "where they were joyfully received by

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the House of Commons. The great Birmingham Union made preparations to march to London 200,000 strong, and encamp on Hampstead Heath."*

But, what was still more startling to the King and the Conservatives, was the fact, which was soon made clear to the Iron Duke, that the militia could no longer be depended upon. The army as well as the people was in sympathy with the popular demand. The Duke of Wellington found it impossible to form a ministry, or to carry forward his cherished plan of coercion. It had also become clear to the Lords that either their opposition must be withdrawn, or the measure would be carried through the creation of a number of Liberal peers, inasmuch as the King had come to recognize, as well as did the foremost statesmen of the time, that revolution could be averted only by yielding to the nation's desire. On the King's addressing a letter to the Peers urging them to withdraw their opposition, the Duke of Wellington and a hundred other lords withdrew from the Chamber, whereupon a vote on the measure was taken that resulted in its passage by a large majority.

By the provisions of the Reform Bill fifty "rotten" boroughs containing less than two thousand inhabitants each were at once abolished, and one

* J. Franck Bright, D.D., "History of England," vol. III., p. 1430.

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hundred and eleven seats declared vacant. The representation in other boroughs was reduced by the abolition of thirty-two seats. There were therefore one hundred and forty-three seats to be disposed of, and these were given to the cities, towns and counties. The middle class thus received a substantial representation in the House of Commons. A reform looking toward uniformity in the franchise was another important feature of this bill, which was in many respects the most momentous and epoch-marking measure in the political history of England since the revolution of 1688, "which established the superiority of Parliament as a whole and its predominance over the Royal power."

This measure introduced a new class into the administration of the government. The aristocracy, which had heretofore been dominant, was now forced to share legislative prerogatives with the middle class, which through the rapid advance in manufacture, commerce and general business conditions had become a most important factor in the national life. "Its victory," says Mr. Bright, "had been secured by a twofold alliance. On the one hand it had taken advantage of the real wants of the classes below it, and of the social ideas which had been called into existence by the French Revolution; it had not scrupled to employ the modern arts of agi-

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tation, or to bring what cannot be regarded in any other light than as unconstitutional pressure to bear upon Parliament. On the other hand it had worked constitutionally by an alliance with one of the governing classes, namely, the Whigs.” *

After the passage of the Reform Bill came the reaction that was sure to follow, when the extravagant hopes that had been fostered in the mind of the toilers during the exciting campaign of 1831 and 1832 were not realized. The great army of thoughtful artisans, who had accepted the Reform Bill as the first step and looked confidently to the Liberals to take up their cause after that measure had been enacted, were bitterly disappointed on finding that their recent allies resolutely refused to agitate for further extension of popular representation. Their position in this respect, together with the passage of a stringent coercion bill for Ireland, and of the still more odious Poor Bill, which applied to the entire realm and of which we have spoken, soon made the Liberal ministry as heartily hated by the artisans as had been the Tory ministry under the Duke of Wellington in the reign of George IV.

The death of William IV. in the early summer of 1837 was followed by the accession of Victoria ; but, as the ministry remained at the helm, no favor-

* J. Franck Bright, D.D., “History of England,” vol. III., p. 1432.

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able change in legislation could be reasonably expected. The severity of the winter of 1837-'38 added greatly to the general restlessness, and to the revolutionary sentiment that was fermenting in the minds of the workingmen. It was also a period of great business depression. There were tens of thousands of laborers vainly seeking employment, while the duty on corn kept up the price of bread. Under such circumstances it was inevitable that a vigorous political party of protest should arise, especially as the poor had become convinced that but little could be hoped for from the two leading political bodies.

In the metropolis there had existed for some time a growing body of artisans who had assumed the name of the "Workingmen's Association."* It was under the able leadership of one William Lovett, an earnest and single-minded worker who possessed far more intelligence and discernment than did most of his companions. This association was for a time strongly encouraged by a group of the most radical Liberals in the House of Commons;

*The Workingmen's Association was one of a number of democratic clubs that were formed at about this time. They resembled in many respects the Socialists of our day. The fundamental idea of the association was well expressed in the following motto, which appeared at the bottom of the membership card: "The man who evades his share of useful labour diminishes the public stock of wealth and throws his own burdens upon his neighbour."

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indeed the committee that framed the "People's Charter" was composed of members of Parliament, and of members of the Workingmen's Association. This group however withdrew soon from all participation in the movement, and most of them became actively opposed to the Chartists. The name Charter was given by Daniel O'Connell, who, when handing the draft of the manifesto to the secretary of the association, said: "Here, Lovett, is your charter. Agitate for it, and never be contented with anything less." Its demands were briefly as follows: (1) Universal suffrage. (2) Annual parliaments. (3) Vote by ballot. (4) No property qualification. (5) Payment of members. (6) Division of the country into equal electoral districts.

With the charter in hand, the association set out to unite industrial England in one great educational campaign looking toward a political revolution similar to that accomplished for the middle class by the Reform Bill. A well-known Radical named Henry Hetherington was deputed to go from city to city and organize the associations. He was an excellent man for the work, being clear-sighted, intelligent, and by nature well qualified to bring men holding ideas in common into one compact group; and he found the soil ready for his seed wherever he journeyed. The "People's Charter" embodied in so

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large a way the general ideas abroad in the mind of the artisan class that the movement grew with great rapidity.

The nobler leaders of Chartism were in the truest sense prophets. They became the articulate voice of the suffering thousands of England, after the latter had been driven by misery from a condition of apathy to something akin to a revolutionary state.

And just here it may well be observed that the rank and file of a nation are, save in very rare instances, ultra-conservative. Indeed, they not infrequently shrink from anything that savors of a radical or revolutionary character far more than do the leaders of thought. This is doubtless due largely to their having been long accustomed to look unquestioningly to those in authority. They think the thoughts after their masters. Man is primarily a creature of habit; and nowhere do we find the chains of custom more firmly riveted than upon the masses, whose lack of leisure for thought has deprived them of the power of quickly and clearly grasping problems in their full significance. As a rule, they venerate the past and bow before law rather than follow justice or right. Hence they will endure wrongs, oppression and injustice for years, for decades, not infrequently for generations,

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after the clear-sighted apostles of progress and of humanity have been forced, by a quickened conscience and by an overmastering passion for the happiness and welfare of the burdened ones, to cry aloud and to ceaselessly labor for the rescue of those who have fallen under the wheel.

The prophet becomes a voice for those who cannot make their own cry heard, because he knows within his own soul that it is his duty to do so—and to him duty is divine. He may realize that his message will be unappreciated; he may know full well that in all probability he will be compelled to sacrifice ease, comfort, the applause of the world, and what men in this age of gain call success; but there is within an imperious voice that will not be denied, and that insists upon his crying aloud and sparing not, be results what they may. He prefers the road to Calvary to ease in the palace of the high priest. The garret, the cell, or the gallows is to him better than wealth, ease, and luxury, if by his life and his word he can further the cause of justice, lift man to nobler heights, or increase the happiness of those whose existence is filled with bitterness. He feels the force of Lowell's lines :

"Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne,—
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own."

Origin, Progress, and Result of Chartism

The apostle of progress and of humanity, though he be despised in his day, lives not in vain. His words are seeds that, slow in germinating though they may be, do in time take root; for no fact in life is more certain than that the scaffold (in the sense in which Lowell uses the term) sways the future. The garret, the prison and the gallows become as Gethsemane, the judgment-hall and Calvary—*holy places*, because they have witnessed the struggle of the divine with the flesh, in supreme and crucial hours of life when for the good of others, or for the triumph of a Truth upon whose establishment Justice and Happiness wait, man has sacrificed those things in life that the world holds most dear.

In the Chartist movement, which seemed to accomplish so little, but in reality wrought so much in leavening public opinion and in educating industrial England, we find a band of prophet-souls among whom were William Lovett, Dr. John Taylor, Ebenezer Elliott, Gerald Massey, and Canon Charles Kingsley—who on one occasion characterized himself as “a Church of England parson and a Chartist.” Though most of these champions of progress and of human brotherhood, and some other leaders, were men of wisdom and judgment, the movement unhappily brought to the front sev-

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eral agitators and orators of a far different character—men who were wanting in philosophical discernment, and that calm mental faculty which enables even the most sympathetic and loving natures to act with wisdom when mere emotionalism would lead to passionate outbreaks and ill-considered deeds.

Of these inconsiderate advocates the most conspicuous was J. R. Stephens, a clergyman of undoubted integrity and a passionate lover of the race, but wholly unfitted for leading wisely great masses of uneducated people. Henry Vincent, Feargus O'Connor, James Bronterre O'Brien, Ernest Jones, and John Frost may also be named as master spirits in the movement,—all men of much ability, but lacking in the qualities most needed for the successful advancement of such a cause.

Seldom has a great, just and good cause been so injured by its sincere friends as was Chartism by those leaders who allowed their emotions to obscure the lessons of history and the dictates of sober judgment. Most of these men were gifted with eloquence and the power of profoundly moving masses of men. They had either felt the curse of poverty themselves, or were thoroughly conversant with the pitiable conditions around them ; but, being without any comprehensive grasp upon the teachings of the past and so ignorant of the folly of

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inflaming the passions of vast multitudes of men who know but little or nothing of the essential issues involved, they persisted in appeals to the *feelings* of the poor, instead of inculcating that knowledge of social conditions and of the fundamental demands of justice and human rights which would have served to draw the people to the cause by *intelligence*, and made the principles of Chartism so dear to the hearts of tens of thousands that they would have been willing to make great sacrifices for it.

Had this been done, the wise attempt made later to induce the people to patronize in trade only those in sympathy with them, and to deny themselves whenever it was impossible to make purchases except by enriching those who were unfriendly to the movement,—in other words, to use the term of a later date, to *boycott* their opponents,—would have succeeded. Chartism would have then taken on a moral dignity that would have exerted a far-reaching effect, awakening sympathy and drawing to its standard thousands through the influence that exhibitions of moral heroism and self-sacrifice ever exert ; while on the other hand it would have shown the government that this vast army of law-abiding and law-loving citizens had become so enamored of a great cause that its fundamental and just demands must be recognized, or sooner or later the govern-

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ment itself would suffer from ignoring the awakened and intelligent conscience of hundreds of thousands of citizens. The cause of Chartism in its earlier stages was also, undoubtedly, greatly injured by the veiled threats against the government, and the boasts of vengeance if the cause of the people should be ignored, that characterized the harangues of many of the leaders.

For a time the government ignored the great meetings that were being held by the Chartists throughout the realm, even though it was repeatedly appealed to by the capitalist classes in the great cities. In a notable address delivered by Lord John Russell, at Liverpool, in the autumn of 1838, the Liberal statesman met the demand of the property-owners for the suppression of the popular meetings by declaring that he held that the people had a right to meet. "If," he asserted, "they have no grievances, common sense will speedily come to the rescue and put an end to their meetings. It is not from free discussion, it is not from the unchecked declaration of public opinion, that governments have anything to fear. There is fear when men are driven by force to secret combination. There is the fear, there is the danger, and not in free discussion."

At length, however, after a national convention of Chartists had assembled and there was every-

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where throughout the realm evidence of the continued growth of the movement, while in town, village and hamlet petitions to parliament were being circulated and freely signed, the government changed its attitude. Stephens and others were arrested. Next torchlight processions were forbidden. The poor became greatly excited, but the leaders for the most part counseled moderation and strict observance of the law.

Parliament assembled, and Mr. Attwood introduced a monster petition containing 1,200,000 signatures* praying for relief for the people by the adoption of the principles set forth in the Charter.† The petition was promptly rejected by Parliament.

At about this time the mayor of Birmingham, aided by a number of metropolitan police sent thither for the purpose, attempted to break up a great Chartist meeting and precipitated a bloody riot. A few days later, when a motion by Mr.

* J. Franck Bright, D.D., "History of England," vol. IV., p. 45.

† The progress that England has made along the line of the democratic ideal is very strikingly illustrated when we compare the contemptuous rejection by Parliament of this petition and of others like it, bearing hundreds of thousands and sometimes millions of signatures, with the present attitude of the English government toward the working classes. Lest the reader should suppose that the petitions were violent, incendiary or ill-considered, and that their demands were unreasonable, I reproduce this petition in full, in Section III. of the Appendix.

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Attwood that the petition be referred to a select committee was overwhelmingly defeated in the House of Commons, great riots occurred in Birmingham and in Newport. From that day Chartism waged a hopeless battle, in so far as securing any immediate recognition of the demands of the Charter from Parliament was concerned. Its representatives had resorted to force, and by so doing had compelled the government to choose between abdication and yielding under threat of violence. Henceforth it was war to the knife. The leading Chartists throughout the realm were arrested and imprisoned by hundreds. Insurrections and riots ensued, followed by rigorous repressive measures, all of which greatly increased the bitterness of the artisans toward the government. The movement continued to wage a more or less vigorous contest till after the continental revolutions of 1848; but from the day when the mob spirit gained ascendancy, the seal of public disapproval was placed upon Chartism. It however, as has been observed, served a useful purpose, inasmuch as it was one of the factors that assisted in awakening the conscience of many thoughtful people among the wealthy and middle classes, while it also educated and interested in social problems hundreds of thousands of the poor and artisan class in England.

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At this juncture, however, there arose another influence in English political life, which served to avert the storm and yet won for the people the reform measures most urgently required at that time, while the victory was of such a nature as set the face of the government steadfastly toward rational and progressive Liberalism.

Before noticing the rise and triumph of the Anti-Corn-Law League that accomplished so much for peace and for progress at this crisis in national history, it will be well to glance briefly at the legislation relating to the trade in grain that, for over eight centuries, vexed the British Isles.

CHAPTER III.

HISTORY OF THE CORN LAWS

Corn Laws after Norman Conquest—Statute of 1436—Statute of 1463—Legislation of 1660-1670—Corn Laws under William and Mary—Burke's Act (1773)—Statute of 1791—Enactments from 1791 to 1846—Repeal of Corn Laws becomes Question of the Hour.

AS THE Corn Laws, which made dear bread by statutory monopoly, were the storm-center around which the reform forces marshaled their strength in the 'forties of the last century, it will be well to survey briefly the restrictive legislation on grain that, for eight hundred years, challenged the attention of English lawmakers.

It is an interesting fact that for four centuries after the Norman Conquest the Corn Laws, instead of being framed for the purpose of protecting and benefiting a particular class by maintaining high prices, were enacted with the definite aim of keeping *down* the cost of the grains used as bread-stuffs, such as wheat, oats, barley and rye—all of which came under the general term of corn.

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The early laws prohibited exportation, save in years of great abundance; when, under special permits or licenses, the producers were allowed to export their surplus.

The origin of these restrictive laws was probably a desire on the part of statesmen to relieve suffering among the poor, and to promote more intimate commercial intercourse between different sections of the country. There were frequently failures of crops in one part of the realm, and abundant harvests elsewhere. But in those early days the facilities for intercourse were very primitive. The roads were often well-nigh impassable, and the country was in many parts sparsely settled and infested by bands of robbers. These and other causes rendered it frequently far easier, safer and cheaper to market grain in the nearest foreign port, than to attempt to find customers in remote districts at home where scarcity prevailed. The efforts of the lawmakers to interfere with freedom of trade, though well intended, worked injuriously rather than otherwise, as they served to discourage the grain raising.

In 1436, during the reign of Henry VI., a statute was enacted permitting exportation without license whenever the price of grain fell below certain stated figures. The preamble of this act discloses a com-

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plete change amounting to a reversal of the aim of the restrictive statute, as it definitely states as the reason for the proposed law that previous legislation had compelled the farmers to sell their corn at low prices.

Almost a generation later (1463) a still more pronounced measure was secured in the interests of the landed class. This law, which sought to secure for the agriculturists a monopoly of the whole market, prohibited the *importation* of grain except when the price at home reached the figures at which export was by law prohibited.

In 1660, during the reign of Charles II., another innovation was made in the corn legislation, with a view to increasing the revenues of the state. Exports and imports were permitted, but each were subject to heavy duties.

The practical result of this legislation was however satisfactory only to the landed class, as it virtually prevented any foreign trade, and while making the price of grain high it yielded but little revenue to the government; so in 1663 sweeping reductions were made in the duties, which served to increase the revenues, but aroused the united and effective resistance of the landed class, who found their monopoly broken up through the change in legislation, and in 1670

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restrictive laws favorable to the agriculturists were enacted.

Even this legislation, however, failed to satisfy the protected class. The appetite of monopoly is insatiable. The cry of those who through state-conferred benefits become rich and powerful is ever for "more," and their tone becomes more and more imperative as they gain in wealth and influence.

The revolution that brought William and Mary to the throne was promptly taken advantage of by the landed class for further benefits. Heavy duties on imports were levied, while not only were all duties on exports abolished, but bounties were granted on grain exported from the realm. "The system of corn law established in the reign of William and Mary," observes an able writer, "was probably the most perfect to be conceived for advancing the agricultural interest of any country. Every stroke of the legislation seemed complete to this end. Yet it wholly failed of its purpose, because no industrial interest whatever can by any artificial means prosper, save in harmonious connection with the progress of other interests." *

The results of these laws were disappointing to

* R. Somers' essay on the Corn Laws, ninth edition of the "Encyclopædia Britannica," vol. VI., p. 410.

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the landed class, a great expense to the government, and a source of discontent among the poor, who were coming to regard the beneficiaries of dear corn as their natural enemies.

In 1773 Burke secured the passage of an act that changed and modified the laws in many important ways. Under this statute the small duty of six pence was imposed on importations, when the home price of wheat was forty-eight shillings a quarter. The statute further not only abolished all bounties on grain exported when the price was forty-four shillings a quarter, but even forbade the sending of grain from the island. For some time after the enactment of this statute legislation was more favorable to freer trade. This was especially noticeable in the act of 1773 relating to the Corn Laws, and also in the commercial treaty negotiated by Mr. Pitt between England and France.

With the upheaval on the Continent, caused by the French Revolution, and the coincident disturbed condition that prevailed in England, came a strong reaction in which the old restrictive policy again gained supremacy; and for more than fifty years the question of the Corn Laws was one of the most vexatious that confronted the great parties. During all these years the landed interests were so intrenched in the government that, though the laws were con-

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stantly meddled with and modified, it was not until after the accession of Victoria that there was any serious opposition aiming at the destruction of the ancient monopoly.

The reaction from the liberal policy introduced by Burke was marked in 1791 by the passage of a statute whose main feature provided for a prohibitory tax on all imported wheat so long as the market price was fifty shillings a quarter, while a duty of two shillings six pence was levied when the price ranged between fifty and fifty-four shillings, and a nominal tax of six pence was levied when wheat reached fifty-four shillings. A bounty on exports was granted, and in all its various provisions the interests of the grain-raising class were considered.

Following the enactment of this law, came some years in which the harvests were failures and the sufferings of the poor very great; but Parliament was so thoroughly dominated by those interested in the corn monopoly that it was impossible to revert to the more liberal laws of earlier times, while the cry against the bread-tax began to grow ominously. To meet this emergency Parliament granted high bounties on importations of grain.

The various legislative enactments between 1791 and the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 consisted

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chiefly of modifications of the sliding scale of duties on imports, though there was in 1825 a temporary exception to the rule relating to Canada, when for a time a fixed duty of five shillings a quarter, regardless of price, was laid on all wheat that came from the British provinces in North America.

In 1828 a law was passed fixing a duty of twenty-three shillings on imported wheat when the market price was sixty-four shillings; sixteen shillings eight pence when the price was sixty-nine shillings, and the nominal tax of one shilling a quarter when the market price was seventy-three shillings, or over.

This sliding scale gave rise to great discontent among traders, and served to discourage all traffic in grain, as will be appreciated when its provisions are considered. Thus, for example, we will suppose that the market for wheat indicated a rise, that it reached seventy-two shillings, and that the merchant placed a heavy order. If the price rose to seventy-three before his grain arrived, he would have but one shilling to pay on the quarter; but, on the other hand, if the price dropped three points, or to sixty-nine, he would have sixteen shillings eight pence to pay, while if the price fell to sixty-four shillings he would have twenty-three shillings to pay on every quarter.

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It is easy to see how such statutes fostered wholesale gambling in bread, and as speculation grew prices rose and fell in an abnormal manner. Thus we find that, in the year that witnessed the accession of Victoria to the throne, the price of corn so fluctuated that the sliding scale of taxes underwent thirty variations in the space of eleven months.

After the masses of England had become infected with the spirit of unrest and a great new hope that seemed to fill the air began to breed discontent with present conditions, after workmen in the great factories or on the highways began to gather in knots and discuss the better time coming, after each man began to think for himself and the literature of revolution found its way into well-nigh every hamlet in Europe,* it was to be expected that the new spirit, embodying the yearnings of millions and the higher and newer ideals of justice and of right, should crystallize round some great question, or follow the banner on which some slogan of promise was emblazoned.

Thus we can easily understand how the repeal of the Corn Laws readily became a popular issue or

* Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton, in his romance entitled "My Novel," gives us in the character of the tinker Spratt a vivid picture of a class of men who went from town to town during this period, leaving a trail of revolutionary literature wherever they journeyed.

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rallying point. The leaders of the Anti-Corn-Law League were carrying on a warfare against monopoly, and it was by no means difficult to convince a man that laws which made a class—and a relatively small class—rich at the expense of the many were bad, provided he did not belong to the protected class. The monopoly was in one of the greatest necessities of life. The “tax on bread” had an ugly sound. It was something that men instinctively objected to when the question was squarely put to them, even though they could not follow an argument, and though an ethical question might have little or no attraction for them. It was among all the questions of the time the one best calculated to arouse the enthusiasm of the more conservative among the reformers, who, while shrinking from force or the thought of revolution, had yet so come under the dominant influence of the age as to feel that the hour had arrived when the nation must go forward.

The Corn Laws stood for special privilege, stood for monopoly and class legislation, by which the few acquired wealth that it could not be truthfully said was earned; and this acquisition was made at the expense of those who toiled long and laboriously. Hence these laws were at once oppressive or burdensome in their operation, and essentially unjust in

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character. They restricted rightful freedom of trade, and were totally at variance with the larger vision of the rights of man that had burst upon the consciousness of the age. These were the strong points that even the dullest plodders could understand, and with these points it is easy to see how the Anti-Corn-Law League came to be so tremendous a power, even when pitted against the wealth of the realm, against the great opinion-forming influences of society, against the press, the church, and the governing classes.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ANTI-CORN-LAW LEAGUE

What it Accomplished—Its Opponents—Later a Class-movement
—Purity of Leaders—Story of the Movement—Richard Cobden
—John Bright—Dark Days and Cobden's Faith.

THE memorable Anti-Corn-Law movement is one of the most thrilling and instructive passages in modern history. Its success unquestionably saved England from a bloody revolution, and—what is still more important—the educational agitation carried on by the League materially furthered the nation in its progress toward freedom. It was largely through this movement that the republican ideal became fixed in the popular imagination; since 1846 the general trend of the nation has been toward broader freedom and juster conditions, while the spirit of the government has become more and more democratic.

The story of the rise, progress and success of the Anti-Corn-Law and Free-Trade crusade rightly demands the careful consideration of patriotic citizens; for we have too few instances of successful

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revolutions accomplished without force or bloodshed, and still rarer have been the cases where the governing classes have failed to retard the onward movement of the larger spirit of freedom and of justice born in the stress of the revolutionary agitation.

It required a man of great faith to look confidently forward to the success of the issues for which the League strove. For several years after its organization it had to meet the strenuous opposition of the Tories, the indifference and (as was more common) the open hostility of the Whigs or Liberals, and the bitter opposition of the Chartists. Thus, on the one hand, there were the great landed interests representing untold wealth largely depending upon the maintenance of the Corn Laws; and, on the other, there was the large and rapidly increasing number who had accepted the new political programme of Chartism. The latter regarded the Anti-Corn-Law League with great distrust, when they were not openly hostile. Many of their more thoughtful leaders believed that at best the repeal of the obnoxious laws would prove merely a palliative measure, and would retard the extension of manhood suffrage—something that they regarded as of incomparably greater moment than the tax on grain. Others (and among them not a few Chartist leaders), after the persecutions by the government, and the

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indifference to the cry of the poor manifested by both parties, had become convinced that the only hope of the triumph of fundamental reform measures, such as would effect a permanent relief for the wretched workers, lay in a forcible revolution.*

While the Anti-Corn-Law agitation was in the beginning a movement due largely to the misery of the poor who were suffering from a great, oppressive and legally-protected monopoly, and while many of its pioneer apostles were men like the Hon. Charles Pelham Villiers, M.P., wholly disinterested patriots moved purely by love of justice and hatred of

* Sentiments similar to those expressed by Ebenezer Elliott in his doleful "Ode to Victoria" were echoed by thousands of persons who, under ordinary circumstances, would have shrunk in horror from the thought of a revolution by force; but, like the Sheffield poet, they had come to regard all measures looking toward a peaceable solution as chimerical. In his ode, it will be remembered, Elliott refers to the queen as "cypress-crowned" and a "Queen of new-made graves" (a reference to the deaths resulting from the Canadian revolution). The following lines from this poem may be said to express the sentiment of a large and growing body of Chartists, after the government began to break up their public meetings and to imprison their leaders:

"Here, too, oh Queen, thy woe-worn people feel
The load they bear is more than they can bear;
Beneath it twenty million workers reel,
While fifty thousand idlers rob and glare,
And mock the sufferings which they yet may share.

"The Drama soon will end; four acts are passed,
The curtain rises o'er embracing foes,
But each dark smiter hugs his dagger fast,
While Doom prepares his match and waits the close:—
Queen of the Earthquake! wouldst thou win or lose?"

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oppression, later, when the agitation had become active, aggressive and formidable, it cannot be denied that it became a class-movement directed against a class-interest. The manufacturers, who furnished the greater part of the money for the educational agitation that revolutionized the thought and quickened the conscience of the nation, were doubtless actuated largely by self-interest.

Yet between the two class-movements there was this marked difference: The Corn Laws were in the line of restriction; they abridged the rightful freedom of the people that the wealth of the few might be augmented, and in so doing they operated so as to increase the misery and suffering of millions of Englishmen, even causing starvation and death. On the other hand, the League fought for a wholesome freedom; not only was its cause fundamentally just, but it made for the prosperity, the comfort and the happiness of the masses, and therefore it was working for the well-being of the nation.

Mr. Morley well observes, in discussing this phase of the agitation, that: "The important fact was that the class-interest of the manufacturers and merchants happened to fall in with the good of the rest of the community; while the class-interest against which they were going up to do battle was an uncompensated burden on the whole common-

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wealth. Besides this, it has been observed on a hundred occasions in history, that a good cause takes on in its progress larger and unforeseen elements, and these in their turn bring out the nobler feelings of the best among its soldiers. So it was here. The class-interest widened into the consciousness of a commanding national interest. In raising the question of the bread-tax, and its pestilent effects on their own trade and on the homes of their workmen, the Lancashire men were involuntarily opening the whole question of the condition of England."*

There is something at once amazing, pathetic, and amusing in the "unctuous rectitude" of the defenders of the Corn Laws when they lifted their hands in horror at the sordid selfishness of the manufacturers who were seeking the repeal of those class-laws. The advocates of the landed interests were shocked beyond measure to find the designing manufacturers seeking to advance *their* interests by unmasking the essential injustice of the Corn Laws and showing how, by their oppressions, the workers were compelled to pay high prices for bread and to receive low wages, while the enforced idleness of thousands was due chiefly to the stagnation in manufacture and trade that was another result of the

* John Morley, "Life of Richard Cobden," p. 17.

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Chinese-wall of protection built by the gentry for their own enrichment. To read the Tory press of the time one would almost feel that the beneficiaries of the Corn Laws were about the only thoroughly disinterested citizens of the realm.

The Anti-Corn-Law League, however, set at work to accomplish the repeal of the unjust statutes. Its leaders were men of the highest moral rectitude. Indeed, had their greed for gain or their desire for self-advancement been paramount with the moving spirits, it is doubtful whether they would ever have succeeded with such opposition as confronted them at every point. Only that moral enthusiasm which is born on the highest plane of human emotion, only that disinterested passion for justice, for freedom and for human happiness which makes men prophets and apostles in a great cause, could have proved invincible, or at least could have effected a peaceable revolution in less than ten years.

The story of the Anti-Corn-Law movement is briefly as follows: On the evening of the eighteenth of September, 1838, a company of fifty earnest men met in Manchester and formed themselves into an association for promoting the principles of free trade. This body was the forerunner of the famous League. With the formation of that organization an active and aggressive campaign was begun. The

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thoughtful and able A. W. Paulton was employed to deliver lectures in the manufacturing centers. This was the starting-point of a memorable campaign of education that had no fellow in the history of the last century.

The ground having been broken in many of the most populous cities, the association took the next step forward. In December, the Manchester chamber of commerce passed a resolution declaring that in its opinion "the great and peaceful principle of Free Trade, on the broadest scale, is the only security for our manufacturing prosperity and the welfare of every portion of the community." A few days later an address was sent to all the municipalities where the new economic agitation had been begun, urging the immediate formation of associations for persistently and effectively pushing forward the educational campaign. Next a league of the cities was proposed; and on January 22, 1839, a great public dinner was held in Manchester, which was attended by over eight hundred delegates from various cities and towns. There were present six members of the House of Commons. On the opening of Parliament, about a week later, three hundred of these delegates repaired to London, and at a meeting held at that time the name Anti-Corn-Law League was assumed by the organization that

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was destined to accomplish so much within the next eight years.

The press of the kingdom, with but few exceptions, was closed to the League. Tories and Chartists vied with each other in bitterness against it—one party because the League was too revolutionary, the other because it was not revolutionary enough. The Whig and Liberal papers studied the ministry. Lord Melbourne had recently declared that the idea of the repeal of the Corn Laws was madness. Hence, taking their cue from the government, the majority of these representative journals either opposed the reformers, or else were indifferent, or too timid to give them a hearing. This, of course, made the outlook peculiarly gloomy; but the League, nothing daunted, outlined and matured the programme for an educational agitation. “They issued pamphlets by hundreds of thousands, and sent lecturers all over the country explaining the principles of Free Trade. A gigantic propaganda of Free-Trade opinions was called into existence. Money was raised by the holding of bazaars in Manchester and London, and by calling for subscriptions. A bazaar in Manchester brought in ten thousand pounds.”*

* McCarthy, “History of Our Own Times,” Am. ed., vol. I, p. 212.

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The mass meetings now held throughout England were phenomenal in character, resembling religious revival meetings in the deep enthusiasm and the profound moral feeling that pervaded them.* Among the speakers usually present were Daniel O'Connell, who gave his enthusiastic aid to the movement, Cobden, Bright, Paulton, and Villiers.

The leaders and the speakers of the movement became veritable apostles of the new social gospel. They believed most sincerely in the righteousness, in the justice, and in the morality of their cause. They consecrated their lives to the movement with the same moral fervor that had marked the most

*There were several things that increased the general discontent and favored organized movement for repeal at this time. Mr. Morley, in his admirable "Life of Richard Cobden," observes:

"The price of wheat had risen to seventy-seven shillings in the August of 1838; there was every prospect of a wet harvesting; the revenue was declining; deficit was becoming a familiar word; pauperism was increasing; and the manufacturing population of Lancashire were finding it impossible to support themselves, because the landlords, and the legislation of a generation of landlords before them, insisted on keeping the first necessity of life at an artificially high rate. Yet, easy as it is now to write the explanation contained in the last few words, comparatively few men had at that time seized the truth of it. The explanation was in the stage of a vague general suspicion rather than the definite perception of a precise cause. Men are so engaged by the homely pressure of each day as it comes, and the natural solitudes of common life are so instant, that a bad institution or a monstrous piece of misgovernment is always endured in patience for many years after the remedy has been urged on public attention. No cure is considered with an accurate mind until the evil has become too sharp to be borne, or its whole force and weight brought irresistibly before the world by its more ardent, penetrative, and indomitable spirits." (Page 18.)

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sincere and devoted apostles of religion in the virgin days of the church.

It was an age of tracts. Every unpopular cause, finding the door of the public press closed, resorted to pamphlets and leaflets; and the League, having no access to the great journals, secured printing-presses and, in addition to issuing their organ the "Anti-Corn-Law Circular," afterwards called "The League," began deluging the nation with tracts and leaflets, many of them short and epigrammatic, some in the form of fables, others in that of stories, some of questions and answers, but all written in such a manner as to appeal to the simplest mind. Every person attending a meeting received several brief tracts, some one of which was, in a large proportion of the cases, pretty sure to carry conviction.

In the League, as is always the case in such associations, the active work was carried on by a few persons; but these men were a host in themselves, the three chief spirits being Richard Cobden, John Bright, and George Wilson. The latter was chairman of the League and a man of great executive ability. The two men, however, who towered above all others in the Anti-Corn-Law and Free-Trade struggle were Cobden and Bright. Each in a vital way complemented the other, though of the two Cobden was the leader. He had entered upon the

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crusade before his friend, driven into it indeed by that overmastering moral compulsion which, with certain choice natures, is supreme. As St. Paul on his way to Damascus had fallen into the light and risen a just man, so Cobden had been overpowered by the ethical import of the movement that had at first appealed chiefly to his business interests and his judgment; until for the cause, when its success came to demand his close attention, he neglected all private matters and personal affairs, even at the cost of a splendid business, begging himself that the people, and especially the needy, might be blessed.

Richard Cobden was the son of a poor farmer. On the death of his father, he accepted a position in a warehouse in London owned by an uncle. Later he engaged in business for himself in a cotton-print factory in Manchester. His school education was very limited; but he was an omnivorous reader, and, as he chose his books with rare judgment and thoroughly mastered all in them that seemed to him worth remembering, he came to be far more broadly cultured than were or are many college-bred men, even from the point of view of book-learning. But his education was by no means confined to books. No man of our time has studied men more thoroughly or to better purpose than did he. The

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investigation of social and economic conditions, and of their relation to the individual and to the State, was supremely fascinating to him. He traveled largely, in the interest of his business and partly for recreation and health, over England, America, France, Switzerland, Egypt, Greece, Turkey, and elsewhere; and everywhere he carried on his penetrating study of man and of his relation to the State and to civilization.

Mr. Cobden's travels served to confirm his views touching the beneficence of free trade, the criminality of war, and the possibility of nations who faithfully set at work to arrive at justice for all, coming together in a spirit of brotherhood. Nothing seemed to impress him more painfully while abroad than the large numbers of men who were withdrawn from productive work or industry to serve in the vast armies that burdened all Christian nations. He viewed with something akin to horror the spectacle of hundreds of thousands of men, in the prime of a splendid vigor, who should have enriched and blessed civilization, but who were withdrawn from all that was in a true sense productive and, armed with murderous weapons, were engaged in watching each other over the national borders. Who supported these men? The toilers, who were thus oppressed and robbed of what should have

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been theirs. And what was the influence on the non-productive life? It could not be other than morally enervating. All this and more was set forth with great clearness and power by this young man, who thus early in life appealed to public opinion for general disarmament. Few men of the past one hundred years have entertained such genuine faith in freedom as did Richard Cobden. In his addresses he never tired of quoting these well-known lines of Cowper, as a confirmation of the clear and logical arguments that had preceded them :

“’T is liberty alone that gives the flower
Of fleeting life its luster and perfume,
And we are weeds without it. All constraint
Except what wisdom lays on evil men
Is evil.”

Cobden possessed the deep human sympathy of Whittier, of Phillips, and of Garrison, and was more sensitive in nature than was perhaps any other great agitator of his century. He shrank from hurting men's feelings. The interesting essayist, Walter Bagehot, aptly observes that : “ Mr. Cobden had a delicate fear of offending other men's opinions. He dealt with them tenderly. He did not like to have his own creed coarsely attacked, and he did—as he could not help doing—as he would be done by. He never attacked any man's creed in any way

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except by what he in his best conscience thought the fairest and justest argument. . . . He never spoke ill of anyone. He arraigned principles, but not persons. . . . There is hardly a word of his to be found perhaps which even now the Recording Angel would blot out." *

Of but few other agitators on the list of the noble and consecrated who have given their all for a once forlorn cause could such a statement as that be truthfully made. "He was a man," says Samuel Smiles, "of unswerving industry and of spotless integrity. In qualities of head and heart we believe him to be excelled by few men. His conscientiousness was of the highest order. Though he had much political enmity to encounter, no one ever charged him with doing a mean thing or prostituting the great power he unquestionably wielded to subserve any personal or selfish end." † He was perhaps the most persuasive orator that the England of the last century produced. His honesty, his sincerity and his moral fervor were united with one of the most logical minds of modern times. He was apt at illustration, and possessed the rare ability of making any subject he discussed clear to all his

* Bagehot's Works, Am. ed., vol. III., "Essay on Cobden," pp. 416, 414, and 415.

† "Brief Biographies," Am. ed., p. 115.

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hearers. Thus, by convincing the brain and touching the heart and all the nobler emotions, he was irresistible when his auditors were open to conviction.

Such, then, was the young man who in 1839 entered the great Anti-Corn-Law fight with the firm determination to consecrate his life to the cause till it was won. He soon became the strongest individuality in the movement, which gradually attracted to itself many of the best minds of the time.

Mr. Cobden's companion-in-arms after the summer of 1841 was also a man of great ability and of strong individuality, possessing a personality even more striking than his own. John Bright was led into the conflict, and through it into Parliament, by the irresistibly persuasive power of his friend, at a moment when he himself felt alone in the world; and though, like his proselyter, he threw all the power and energy of his nature into the work, it is probable that the cause itself would not have lifted him out of the even tenor of his routine life, had it not been for the strange circumstance that changed the whole course of his career.

Bright was born in 1811. His father was a cotton spinner and manufacturer, who after his son

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had enjoyed the ordinary school advantages of the day placed him at the age of fifteen in a counting-house, where except during a brief visit to the Continent he remained for twelve years, devoting his entire time to business. In 1839 he married; two years later his wife died.

It was in this dark hour, grief and desolation his companions, all his rosy dreams of life dissipated, that Cobden came to him and from the corpse of his young wife turned his eyes to the thousands of *other* homes in old England where at that time *other* wives, just as dear to their loving ones as his had been to him, were even then dying. Their lots however were far different from that so lately enjoyed by Mrs. Bright, for in these homes and hovels grim want rendered it impossible for love to give the sick the simple food, the attention and the help that might bring renewed health, but lacking which the sufferers were slowly wasting away. "There are," said Mr. Cobden, "thousands of homes in England at this moment, where wives, mothers, and children are dying of hunger. Come with me, and we will never rest till the Corn Laws are repealed." A solemn covenant was thereupon made; for the simple, earnest and eloquent appeal of Mr. Cobden moved all that was best in the grief-stricken young

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man. Henceforth the die was cast, John Bright went forth to battle for the weak—and truer knight earth has never known.

Bright fought for justice, for freedom, for peace, and for the higher law. He was one of the noblest characters whose presence dignified and added to the true greatness of the nineteenth century. He came of Quaker stock. His ancestors had been imprisoned and had suffered much from the dominant Christian church for their opinions' sake. He was a man of simple and sublime faith, and of large and generous views, at a time when skepticism on the one hand and reactionary religion on the other were everywhere in evidence. He was whole-souled in his devotion to whatever he conceived to be right. "He was ever ready," said Mr. Gladstone, "to lay his popularity as a sacrifice upon the altar of duty." Never in his long, stormy, and illustrious career did he hesitate in unswervingly following the dictates of conscience, though at times he knew full well that to do so meant the sacrifice of his seat in Parliament, the bitter abuse of the press, and the censure of his friends. On one occasion he said: "I will not do that which my conscience tells me is wrong, to gain the huzzas of thousands or the daily praise of all the papers which come from the press. I will not avoid doing what I

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think is right, though it should draw on me the whole artillery of libels,—all that malice can invent or credulity swallow.”

Bright's love and reverence for right, for justice, for peace, and for the moral law were so great that they lifted him above all thought of popularity, or of what men might say of him. War and slavery were abhorrent to him. When England embarked in the Crimean struggle he raised his voice in protest and arraigned the nation before the bar of the higher law, though in so doing he knew that he courted defeat. When our great war of the Rebellion broke out, Mr. Gladstone reflected the general sentiment of England in his strong sympathy with the South; but here again the voice of Bright rang out clear and strong in defence of freedom. In 1862, in the closing words of one of the most eloquent addresses ever delivered in Parliament, he thus referred to our republic: “The leaders of this revolt propose this monstrous thing,—that over a territory forty times as large as England the blight and curse of slavery shall be forever perpetuated. I cannot believe, for my part, that such a fate will ever befall that fair land, stricken though it now is with the ravages of war. I cannot believe that civilization, in its journey with the sun, will sink into endless night. I have

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another and a far brighter vision before my gaze. It may be but a vision, but I will cherish it. I see one vast confederation, stretching from the frozen north in unbroken line to the glowing south, and from the wild billows of the Atlantic westward to the calmer waters of the Pacific main; and I see one people, and one language, and one law, and one faith, and over all that wide continent the home of freedom, and a refuge for the oppressed of every race and of every clime."

"For many years of his life," says Archdeacon Farrar, "he had the honour—I say quite deliberately, the honour—of being one of the best hated men in the country. For fully half his life he enjoyed the beatitude of malediction. It is an honour which he shared with many of God's noblest heroes and sweetest saints. It is an honour which he shared with martyrs and prophets, and with the great benefactors of mankind, with the apostles, with Christ himself. It is an honour which every man shall gain who refuses to swim with the stream, who refuses to answer the multitude according to their idols." *

"For twenty-five years," said Mr. Bright on

* Frederic W. Farrar, D.D., F.R.S., "Social and Present-Day Questions," p. 318.

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one occasion, "I have stood before great meetings of my countrymen, pleading only for justice. During that time, as you know, I have endured measureless insult and passed through hurricanes of abuse."

I know of no other English statesman of the nineteenth century who, at all times and under all circumstances, held so steadfastly to the highest moral ideals as did John Bright. His thought was habitually lofty, and all political questions were judged by him from the standpoint of moral right. To him whatever was morally wrong could not be politically right; to decide his action on any political question or measure proposed, it was necessary for him merely to settle its ethical bearing. "There is," he declared, "no permanent greatness to a nation except it be based upon morality. . . . We have the unchangeable and eternal principles of the moral law to guide us, and only so far as we walk by that guidance can we be permanently a great nation or our people a happy people." He held that there was something far more august than parliament or monarch, and that was "the tribunal which God has set up in the consciences of men." "I do not care," he said at one time, "for military greatness or military renown. I care for the condition of the

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people among whom I live. Palaces, baronial castles, great halls, stately mansions do not make a nation. The nation in every country dwells in the cottage, and, unless the light of your constitution can shine there, rely upon it that you have yet to learn the duties of government."

As an orator John Bright had but few peers, if indeed he had one, in the Parliament of his land. He was slow of speech in the opening remarks; every word seemed carefully chosen and uttered with great deliberation, and often many were greatly disappointed when he began to speak; but as he proceeded, and almost before they became aware of the fact, they found themselves lifted as it were out of their self-consciousness and swept onward with the current of the orator's thoughts. One of the most scholarly and eloquent clergymen of England bears testimony to the oratorical powers of John Bright thus:

"I have heard him when, in English of matchless strength and matchless simplicity, and in a voice which sometimes seemed to breathe through silver, and rang anon with the trumpet tones of scorn and indignation, he stood before vast audiences, playing on their emotions as on some mighty instrument. I have seen him now sweeping them into stormy sympathy before the strong wind of his passion; now holding them hushed as an infant at its mother's breast; now making them break into radiancy of laughter; now whitening their upturned faces with sympathetic tears; sometimes even lifting them to their feet

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in a burst of uncontrollable and spontaneous enthusiasm. I have heard him rain down the large blows of his impassioned rhetoric, as when a smith brings down his sledge-hammer on the glowing anvil, forging the plastic iron into what he will. And never have I heard him abuse for base or personal ends this mighty power." *

It would be difficult to estimate the influence that this great commoner wielded for the higher morality, for freedom, for justice, and for human rights; certain it is that he strengthened the conscience of Parliament as did no other statesman of his day. His splendid faith in the power of right often seemed strange enough to policy-mongering opportunists, who were unable to understand how a man could deliberately throw away his chance of a return to the House by bravely defending what he believed to be right, but what he also knew to be unpopular!

It is not difficult to realize how two such men as Richard Cobden and John Bright awakened the sleeping conscience of old England and rendered the repeal of the unjust Corn Laws inevitable. Men who believe in the power of truth, of justice and of morality, as did they, carry conviction when an army who speak only to the intellect fail to attract or move. "How is it," asked Mr. Bright, "that any great thing is accomplished? By love

* Farrar's "Social and Present-Day Questions," p. 312.

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of justice, by constant devotion to a great cause, and by an unfaltering faith that what is right will in the end succeed."

Though the agitation was prosecuted with great vigor, there were from the first until the triumph in '46 many dark days. Time and again, after the League had become convinced that victory was almost at its door, the action of the ministry, or some turn in political affairs, dashed all their hopes.

The fate common to all great fundamental movements that concern liberty and justice for the masses was perhaps never more clearly illustrated than in the Anti-Corn-Law and Free-Trade campaign between '39 and '46.

In 1841-'42, and in almost every year thereafter, the League was alternately buoyed up with the confident expectation of early victory, and cast down to the depths by the apparent hopelessness of the crusade; though it should be observed that with Cobden, with Bright, and with Wilson, who may be called eminently the apostles of the movement, discouragement was in all instances of but temporary duration. They had gone into the battle determined to know no such word as fail; they were seeking no personal advancement; and they were ready to sacrifice all personal interests for the cause

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the triumph of which they believed was demanded by every consideration of wisdom, of justice, and of human progress.

Cobden's faith in the power of a righteous cause has seldom been equalled in modern times. Timid friends no less than confident foes were continually declaring that England would never open her markets to free grain, because her landlords and agriculturists were "too mighty to be overthrown, or even shaken."

It was pointed out time and again that in Parliament the landed class was overwhelmingly in the majority. And not only that, they were incomparably the stronger financially; it was shown that all the liberal contributions made by the manufacturers and others interested in the repeal of the Corn Laws, were as a drop in the bucket when compared with the wealth arrayed against the reformers. It was shown further that the press was with the Opposition. Conservatism and custom were on its side. In fact, the spectacle but too plainly suggested the one-sided duel between David and Goliath; only, as in olden times so now, the David had the superb faith in his own invincibility so long as he was armed with truth and with justice, and his foot was on the path of Progress.

Cobden insisted that, when the reason of the

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nation had been convinced and its conscience aroused, all the powers of entrenched capital and conservatism would be powerless to prevent the realization of the public demands. England was not France, and her history in the past justified his views. He believed that, when their cause could once be fairly placed before the bar of public opinion, victory was assured. He asked: "How every social change and every religious change had been accomplished, otherwise than by an appeal to public opinion. How had they secured the penny postage? Not by sitting still and quietly wishing for it, but by a number of men stepping out and spending their money and giving their time agitating the community." *

* Morley's "Life of Cobden," p. 19.

CHAPTER V.

HUMANITARIAN SPIRIT IN LITERATURE OF THE PERIOD AND SOME THINKERS WHO WROUGHT FOR PROGRESS

Political Influences not Alone at Work—A Wave of Human Sympathy — Bulwer's "King Arthur" — Ebenezer Elliott — Carlyle — Dickens — Elizabeth Barrett — Hood — Mackay — Massey — Maurice — Charles Kingsley — Mazzini — Youth a Nation's Hope.

THOUGH the ruling spirits in both of the great political parties, a large majority of the aristocracy, and the vast preponderance of wealth, of conventional society and of the Established Church were ranged on the side of the old régime in its opposition to the reforms that were pressing for governmental recognition, there were other influences of which the politicians took little account, but which were nevertheless effectively working for progress by awakening the sense of justice in the heart of the people. This, when once aroused, becomes an important factor in the warfare between an old order and the new ideals.

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To understand something of these currents that fed the noble discontent of the time, it will be necessary for us to consider now the aggressively moral or what may be called the *conscience* literature of the day. And in our survey of this field we must give especial attention to the writings that came from and to those that particularly interested the poor and the people of moderate means; for, as John Bright well said, "Palaces, baronial castles, great halls, stately mansions do not make a nation. The nation, in every country, dwells in the cottage."

During the 'thirties and 'forties of the last century we find men and women in almost every walk of life, but notably those who had themselves suffered much, contributing in an important way to the conscience-force at work in the land. It was indeed a time of moral awakening such as England has rarely seen. "A great wave," says Mr. Morley, "of humanity, of benevolence, of desire for improvement—a great wave of social sentiment, in short—poured itself among all who had the faculty of large and disinterested thinking. The political spirit was abroad in its most comprehensive sense, the desire of strengthening society by adapting it to better intellectual ideals, and enriching it from new resources of moral power. A feeling for social regeneration, under what its apostles conceived to be

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a purer spiritual guidance, penetrated ecclesiastical common-rooms no less than it penetrated the manufacturing districts. To the fermentation of those years Carlyle contributed the vehement apostrophes of 'Chartism' and 'Past and Present,' glowing with eloquent contempt for the aristocratic philosophy of treadmills, gibbets, and thirty-nine Acts of Parliament 'for the shooting of partridges alone,' but showing no more definite way for national redemption than lay through the too vague words of Education and Emigration."*

On every hand the voice of progress was heard in the literature of the period; songs, poems, essays, sermons, and stories pervaded with ethical enthusiasm were as rivulets, brooks, and rivers feeding the swelling flood of humanitarianism. Even conventional and aristocratic writers, who were temperamentally sensitive and receptive, came under the irresistible sway of the spirit of reform.

Thus conservative Lord Lytton, with his horror of Chartism and his wholly mistaken views of the aims and character of Socialism, succumbed nevertheless to the spirit of the age in a remarkable degree; a striking illustration of which can be found in his long poem "King Arthur," which he always held was his greatest work. "King Arthur"

* Morley's "Life of Cobden," p. 10.

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was written in the 'forties of the nineteenth century; and, though the subject matter of the poem belonged to a far-away legendary period, the author could not refrain from introducing into his work a vivid and tragic picture of the triumph of the spirit of commercialism over the higher and nobler sentiments in man. Without understanding the character of the time in which Bulwer wrote his "King Arthur," it would be difficult to account for such stanzas as the following, which, it will be remembered, occur where the Genius reveals the future to the King:

"Slow fades the pageant, and the Phantom stage
As slowly fill'd with squalid, ghastly forms;
Here, over fireless hearths cower'd shivering Age
And blew with feeble breath dead embers;—storms
Hung in the icy welkin; and the bare
Earth lay forlorn in Winter's charnel air.

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"No careless Childhood laugh'd disportingly,
But dwarf'd, pale mandrakes with a century's gloom
On infant brows, beneath a poison-tree
With skeleton fingers plied a ghastly loom,
Mocking in cynic jest life's gravest things;
They wove gay King-robcs, muttering 'What are Kings?'

"And through that dreary Hades to and fro,
Stalk'd all unheeded the Tartarean Guests;
Grim Discontent that loathes the Gods, and Woe

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Clasping dead infants to her milkless breasts;
And madding Hate, and Force with iron heel,
And voiceless Vengeance sharp'ning secret steel.

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“‘Can such things be below and God above?’
Falter'd the King;—replied the Genius—‘Nay,
This is the state the sages most approve;
This is Man civilized!—the perfect sway
Of Merchant Kings; the ripeness of the Art
Which cheapens men—the Elysium of the Mart.’”

It is not, however, among the conventional writers that we must look for the conscience-force in the literature that helped on so powerfully the reform victories of this period. The men and women who in literature wrought for social righteousness were often voices crying in the wilderness of a society given over to gain. Not infrequently they belonged to the very poor. They had suffered much. They arraigned society in burning words, becoming the articulate voice of millions in misery; as such they were august. Indeed the story of their lives, as well as the glowing words that bore the message home to the heart of the nation, is instructive, inspiring and valuable as helping us to interpret aright the age in which they wrought.

The pioneer of a band of social bards was Ebenezer Elliott. He might also be called the

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John the Baptist of the Anti-Corn-Law crusade ; for long before Richard Cobden had stirred the reason of England, or the burning eloquence of John Bright had touched the hearts of thousands who had never before been interested in the moral aspects of economic problems, Elliott had arraigned the conscience of the nation for permitting the poor to starve while the landed classes grew rich by the tax on grain.

It would be difficult to estimate the influence of this earnest and sincere poet of the people, whose rude and homely phrases were strangely blended with elevated moral sentiments and flashes of true poetry, suggesting at times the stalwart old prophets of Israel whose ringing words in behalf of justice still stir the heart of the world. His ethical poetry was dominated by "the Eternal Idea of Right" (his own synonym for God). He had small regard for dilettante rhymesters. "We cannot spare one true man from the ranks of thought and progress in these distracted times," he was wont to say. The thought of the hungry and poor hung over his soul like a vast pall. "God," he remarked to a friend on one occasion as the two wandered in a rural valley, "has given us food to eat, and man, the tyrant, has taxed it! and these beautiful birds are singing as if there were no sorrow in the world. Ye break

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my heart, ye little birds." And as he spoke, his friend observed tears brimming in his eyes. His "hate," says his biographer, Mr. Phillips, "sprang from love; from the inmost depths of a heart that vibrated with sympathy for all that was high and dear to man. Hence an act of oppression done to the meanest creature, was done to him . . . his mission . . . was that of a reformer . . . and he clothed his message in the forms of poetry, and the robes of song, that he might render it attractive and successful." *

Ebenezer Elliott came of sturdy Puritan stock. His father, an ultra-Calvinist in religion and a republican in politics, had scandalized the community by his outspoken praise of George Washington and the young republic over the sea. He was respected, however, in spite of his unpopular religious and political "vagaries," as the people called them, because of his sterling integrity, of his love of justice and fair play, and of his untiring industry. He was an iron-founder by trade. The poet's mother was a retiring, sensitive woman of deep affection and a tender heart that went out in love to all who were in sorrow, or in need. Much of the boy's time in his earlier years was spent

* George Searles Phillips, "Memoirs of Ebenezer Elliott," pp. 31-32.

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in his father's foundry and the yard adjoining it. His love of the beautiful, however, could not be destroyed by the unpoetic surroundings. The plants, the earth, the sky and whatever was fair to look upon were dear to him. When he was very small we find him making a little garden in the middle of the foundry yard, in which he planted mugwort and wormwood, and in the midst of the flower-bed he placed a large pan filled with water, that he might enjoy the blue sky and the fleecy clouds and the growing plants reflected in the water below.

At school young Elliott was accounted very dull, and frequently played truant that he might wander in the country lanes amid the flowers and the birds. From his earliest recollection nature had exerted a strange and wonderful spell over his imagination. His father, despairing of making a scholar of him, set him at work in the foundry; but the child had already learned far more in Nature's vast workshop than most boys acquire in a common school, and already the poet-soul had been deeply stirred within him.

One day his brother read to him from Thomson's "Seasons." The book was a revelation and an inspiration. He took the volume into the garden to compare the poet's description of certain

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flowers with the originals, and thenceforth the wonders and beauties of nature began to weave themselves into verses. His limited knowledge now troubled him, so he procured a grammar and other books and began to master those studies that his teachers had vainly striven to inculcate. Patiently in his leisure hours he studied the dry text-books till he was able to write good English. Meanwhile he toiled in his father's foundry without receiving wages until he was twenty-three years of age. At about that time he married a young woman who possessed a considerable fortune. This money however was unfortunately invested in a business already bankrupt, and for many years the poet struggled hopelessly, till at last all his resources were exhausted and he was forced to accept temporary shelter under the roof of his sister-in-law.

In 1821, when forty years of age, Elliott was able to venture again in business. This time the tide turned his way ; he prospered, and was soon able to hold up his head and look the world squarely in the face. But during his adversity he had suffered keenly ; the misery of the poor had been borne in upon his sensitive imagination with irresistible force. He had faced poverty ; he knew what it was to feel dependent, and in looking abroad he saw tens of thousands of others far worse off than himself,—

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men and women who were bravely fighting a losing battle, who almost constantly felt the gnawing of hunger, and with whom the dread of the poorhouse and a pauper's grave was an ever-present hideous nightmare. Thus it is not strange that the songs he sung took on a tragic tone, or that justice for the poor became the burden of his verse. His noblest creation is entitled "The Village Patriarch." It abounds in lines of rare beauty, and deserves a permanent place among the songs of justice that the bards of freedom from time to time have contributed to the cause of progress.

Elliott was first brought prominently before the literary world through the influence of Lord Lytton and of Thomas Carlyle. How truly the message of the corn-law rhymer had impressed the latter may be inferred from the following summary of his essay on "Corn-Law Rhymes," which reveals the author's sympathy with the Sheffield poet :

"The Corn-Law Rhymer has *believed*, and therefore is again believable. He is a Sheffield Worker in brass and iron ; but no 'Uneducated Poet,' such as dilettante patronage delights to foster. He is an earnest, truth-speaking, genuine man. Strong and beautiful thoughts are not wanting in him. A life of painfulness, toil, insecurity, scarcity, is endured ; yet he fronts it like a man. Affection dwells with Danger, all the holier for the stern environment. Not as a rebel does he stand ; yet as a free man, spokesman of free men, not far from rebelling against much. He feels deeply the frightful con-

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dition of our entire social affairs, and sees in Bread-tax the summary of all our evils. To the working portion of the aristocracy such a voice from their humble working brother will be both welcome and instructive. To the idle portion it may be unwelcome enough."

In the following passages from "Corn-Law Rhymes" we see how deeply Carlyle himself had been affected by the educational agitation and the unrest of the time; how keenly he felt the misery and oppression of the people, and the great peril that menaced the nation should it continue to refuse justice till free men became degraded by losing their high ideals and free spirit, thereby becoming slaves in soul as well as in body. In speaking of Elliott he says :

"He feels, as all men that live must do, the disorganization, and hard-grinding, unequal pressure of our Social Affairs. The frightful conditions of a Time when public and private Principle, as the word was once understood, having gone out of sight, and Self-interest being left to plot, and struggle, and scramble, as it could and would, Difficulties had accumulated till they were no longer to be borne, and the spirit that should have fronted and conquered them seemed to have forsaken the world ;—when the Rich, as the utmost they could resolve on, had ceased to govern, and the Poor, in their fast-accumulating numbers, and ever-widening complexities, had ceased to be able to do without governing; and now the plan of 'Competition' and '*Laissez-faire*' was on every side, approaching its consummation; and each, bound-up in the circle of his own wants and perils, stood grimly distrustful of his neighbour, and the distracted Common-woe was a Common-woe, and to all men it became apparent that the end was drawing nigh :—all this black aspect of Ruin and Decay, visible

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enough, experimentally known to our Sheffield friend, he calls by the name of 'Corn-Law,' and expects to be in good part delivered from, were the accursed Bread-tax repealed.

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"Mournful enough, that a white European Man must pray wistfully for what the horse he drives is sure of,—that the strain of his whole faculties may not fail to earn him food and lodging. Mournful that a gallant manly spirit, with an eye to discern the world, a heart to reverence it, a hand cunning and willing to labour in it, must be haunted with such a fear. The grim end of it all, Beggary! A soul loathing, what true souls ever loathe, Dependence, help from the unworthy to help; yet sucked into the world-whirlpool,—able to do no other: the highest in man's heart struggling vainly against the lowest in man's destiny. . . . Alas, the Workhouse is the bourne whither all these actors and workers are bound; whence none that has once passed it returns! A bodeful sound, like the rustle of approaching world-devouring tornadoes quivers through their whole existence; and the voice of it is, Pauperism! The thanksgiving they offer up to Heaven is, that they are not yet Paupers; the earnest cry of their prayer is, that 'God would shield them from the bitterness of Parish Pay.'

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"Meanwhile, is it not frightful as well as mournful to consider how the widespread evil is spreading wider and wider? Most persons, who have had eyes to look with, may have verified, in their own circle, the statement of this Sheffield Eye-witness, and 'from their own knowledge and observation fearlessly declare that the little master-manufacturer, that the working man generally, is in a much worse condition than he was twenty-five years ago.' Unhappily, the fact is too plain; the reason and scientific necessity of it is too plain. In this mad state of things, every new man is a new misfortune; every new market a new complexity; the chapter of chances grows ever more incalculable; the hungry gamesters (whose stake is their life)

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are ever increasing in numbers ; the world-movement rolls on ; by what method shall the weak and help-needing, who has none to help him, withstand it ? Alas, how many brave hearts, ground to pieces in that unequal battle, have already sunk ! Must it grow worse and worse, till the last brave heart is broken in England ; and this same ' brave Peasantry ' has become a kennel of wild-howling, ravenous Paupers ? God be thanked ! there is some feeble shadow of hope that the change may have begun while it was yet time. You may lift the pressure from the free man's shoulders, and bid him go forth rejoicing ; but lift the slave's burden, he will only wallow the more composedly in his sloth : a nation of degraded men cannot be raised up, except by what we rightly name a miracle."

Thomas Carlyle contributed in many ways to the moral and social ferment of the period. He ever preached the gospel of work. " If you have anything to do in the world *do* it " ; this was the burden of his message. He was preëminently a utilitarian ; but he was also far more. He appreciated the seriousness of life. To him duty was divine. He had struggled up the mountain, he had conquered ; but only after he had laboriously climbed over many of those grave difficulties that beset the path of the conscientious man, and which at times seem almost insurmountable. After his triumph he could not remain silent while thousands on every hand were living the butterfly life, seemingly ignorant of the great and solemn responsibilities, the wonderful peace and the infinite joy that come to those who realize the value and dignity of existence

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and act up to the highest vision vouchsafed to them. He hated sham and all hollow pretense. "His great aim was to call back man to reality." He "aroused a self-seeking generation to a higher idea of life," and "left an indelible mark on the thought of the nineteenth century."*

Carlyle was born in a humble home in the Scotch village of Ecclefechan, on the fourth of December, 1795. Poor as were his parents, they appreciated the importance of education, and gladly made great sacrifices that their boy might receive the instruction that would some day qualify him to become a minister in the Kirk of Scotland; for they were ardent Calvinists. At the age of ten, after learning all the village schoolmaster could impart, the lad entered the academy at Annandale; thence, at the age of fourteen, he went to the university of Edinburgh. At that time many of the ambitious and poor youths of Scotland while at the university earned enough at odd times to pay the rent of their rooms. Their parents sent them oatmeal and potatoes on which they lived. At intervals their clothes were sent for and carefully mended by the tireless and devoted mother. It was in this manner that Thomas Carlyle went through college.

At length the hour came when the university

* May Alden Ward, "Prophets of the Nineteenth Century," p. 7.

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course was ended. The parents expected the boy to enter the ministry, but his heart willed otherwise. He was now nineteen years of age, and during his studies his intellectual vision had broadened. Many things that he had unhesitatingly accepted as a child did not commend themselves to his more mature intellect. In a word, he felt that he could not conscientiously accept much that a minister of the Kirk of Scotland was compelled to subscribe to.

The conflicting desires on the one hand to please his parents and satisfy the expectations of his friends, and on the other to be loyal to his own conviction of right, led to one of those intense mental conflicts that are apt to trouble sensitive and finely strung natures. How real and terrible this battle was we may judge from his own words. "I entered my chamber," he writes, "and closed the door, and around me there came a trooping throng of phantoms dire from the abysmal depth of the nethermost perdition. Doubt, fear, unbelief, mockery and scoffing were there; and I wrestled with them in agony of spirit. Thus it was for weeks. Whether I ate I know not, whether I drank I know not, whether I slept I know not. But I know that when I came forth again it was with the direful persuasion that I was the miserable owner of a diabolical arrangement called a stomach."

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This struggle was one of the most momentous of Carlyle's life. It involved by no means merely a decision affecting a profession, but was rather a battle between the light and darkness ; between whether he should at all times hold resolutely to his conviction of right, or should on occasion compromise his ideal with ignoble demands ; whether the aim and object of his life should be fame, money, place and power, or fidelity to truth and to all that was highest in his nature. Of his victory, of the conclusion finally reached by him and that governed his life, we catch a luminous glimpse in these striking words :

“ We are here to do God's will. The only key to a right life is self-renunciation. The man who lives for self, who works for selfish ends, is a charlatan at bottom, no matter how great his powers. The man who lives for self alone has never caught a vision of the true meaning and order of the universe. Human life is a solemn thing,—an arena wherein God's purpose is to be worked out. I must, with open, spiritual vision, behold in this universe, and through it, the Mighty All, its Creator, in His beauty and grandeur, humbling the small Me into nothingness. His purpose, not mine, shall be carried out, for to that end the universe exists. Life shall be a barren, worthless thing for me unless I seek to fall in with God's plan, and do the work he has sent me here to do. Ah, then, the torturous pangs of disappointed hopes, jealousy, and despair shall be at rest, and I, now in harmony with God, can sing at my work, and amid my toil find blessed rest. For, what though I fail to reach the mark I set before me ; what though its immediate results have been small ? The very attempt, persevered in, of working out the Divine purpose in my life, has made that life a truly noble one. Now, indeed, I am indepen-

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dent of the world's smile or frown, since I am in harmony with God, and have His smile as the light of my life. I have got into the blessed region of the 'Everlasting Yea.' And however ill outwardly and apparently, all is going well for me inwardly and ultimately."

Carlyle refused to enter the ministry and for a time taught. Next he studied law, but in due time renounced that too. At length friends secured him work on the "Edinburgh Encyclopædia." At about this time a friend introduced him to Mrs. Welsh and her daughter Jenny. Carlyle fell in love with the latter, and finally won her consent. The two were married, and for a time they almost starved in Edinburgh; for Carlyle was a slow and laborious writer. Finally poverty drove them to a little moorland farm that Jenny had inherited at Craigenputtoch; it was a desolate place, fifteen miles from a village, and the nearest neighbor more than a mile away. Here Carlyle lived for seven years, and here he wrote "Sartor Resartus." At length poverty drove him from this retreat also, and he journeyed to London in search of work. Finally he settled in Chelsea, where he wrote his greatest work, "The French Revolution," and many other contributions to the permanent literature of the English language, while keeping in touch with the progressive movements of the age and with the leading spirits in revolt.

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Charles Dickens was another thinker who contributed in no small degree to the humanitarian spirit of the time. He was then a young man busily engaged in journalism, but whose brain was teeming with pictures of social wrong; he employed his leisure moments in writing those marvelous stories that portrayed so graphically and terribly many of the evils of the day as to force an exclamation of horror from society, the exclamation being followed by the interrogation, "Are these things true?" Now, the exclamation and the interrogation point are the staff and the crook of Progress; when they are once raised, reform soon follows. So this strong young man unmasked so effectively many of the crying evils suffered by the poor that the abolition of some of them became comparatively easy. Dickens not only knew that the pictures he drew were mainly true, he was able to sympathize with the poor; for he was no stranger to poverty. He had seen his own father taken from their home to prison for debt. The pawnbroker was not unknown in his family. His education had been very scanty, and he had known what it was to drudge.

At fifteen years of age Dickens entered an attorney's office as office-boy. While here he determined to become a parliamentary reporter and to enter the

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field of journalism and literature. The story of his struggle and victory, with so meager an education as one of many barriers confronting him, should be an inspiration to every aspiring youth. It is the story of work—of patient, persistent, and energetic application. But Dickens had more than an iron will; he had also a strong imagination, and an original intellect. In a degree almost unique among authors he possessed the noble virtue of human sympathy, which brought him *en rapport* with the awakening moral enthusiasm of the period. He had confronted Poverty and with sinking heart looked the terror squarely in the face. Hence he could sympathize with those who suffered from its cruel grasp.

His life as a reporter brought him in touch with the ethical ideals with which the time was rife, with the great suffering of the poor, and with the injustice that the weak were too often forced to bear. Thus it came to pass that the helpless ones became his special charge and valiantly did he strive to awaken sympathy for the weak and the unfortunate, while unmasking great wrongs and combating crying evils.

While Charles Dickens was appealing to the conscience of readers in his novels there was in one of London's homes of wealth and culture a wonderfully gifted young woman, whose poems had already brought her fame, and who was destined to rise to

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a high place among the Victorian authors, and to become the wife of the greatest English poet of the century.

At this time Elizabeth Barrett was an invalid; indeed, her physician doubted whether she would ever recover her health. Yet, in spite of intense suffering, she persisted in studying, in writing, and in keeping in touch with the great bustling world. The spirit of the age had penetrated into her darkened room, and the moral welfare of the people was of deep concern to her. Among her friends was Richard Henry Horne, the poet and essayist; he also was interested in the condition of the poor; he had been appointed assistant commissioner in a government investigation started to learn the facts connected with child-labor in the mines, factories and shops of the realm. The revelations were as startling as they were shameful; on the publication of the report, Miss Barrett first became acquainted with facts revealing the tragic fate of tens of thousands of little ones. She read the report with something akin to horror. The condition of the children haunted her waking and her sleeping hours. One day she took her pen and wrote that immortal poem and protest "The Cry of the Children,"*

* See "Typical Poems and Songs of the Period of the Corn-Law and Chartist Agitations," in Appendix.

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one of the most moving heart-cries of the age, which, together with Thomas Hood's "Song of the Shirt" and "The Bridge of Sighs," * epitomizes the tragic fate of thousands of children and women under the reign of modern commercialism. The Rev. William James Dawson points out the interesting fact that by these three poems the city, in its tragic social aspect, became definitely annexed to the realm of English poetry. He also regards Elizabeth Barrett and Thomas Hood as pioneers in the modern movement that is fast socializing poetry in spirit as well as in theme. †

Like Elizabeth Barrett, Thomas Hood suffered much from sickness; in his case, to the pain of physical disease was added also the anxious care and harassment of mind that are known fully only by the man who is battling bravely to support a family. Though sick and poor, however, Hood was one of those rare natures that meet life's perplexities with a strong heart and smiling eye. He was one of the bravest and kindest of men; the world little suspected the pain of body or the distress of mind that filled many days when, with a winning smile and a cheerful word or charming jest, he gladdened all with whom he came in contact. He was a gifted

* *Ibid.*

† W. J. Dawson, "Makers of Modern English," pp. 161-163.

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author. His wit and humor were inimitable, and he possessed deep insight and the imagination of a true poet. Had he not been forced to devote his best years simply to writing matter that would bring in ready money, he might have ranked among the foremost poets of the Victorian era. "The Song of the Shirt," "The Bridge of Sighs," and others of his creations reveal genuine poetic genius, and will live in our literature. In his incessant struggle to provide for his loved ones, he burned the taper at both ends; when so ill that he should have enjoyed absolute respite from toil, he was still forced to drive the pen for bread. He always made light of his own sufferings. Even when the shadow of death lay on his brow, he strove to charm away the tears from the loving eyes of those ministering to him with the following grim but characteristic jest. The doctor had ordered a mustard plaster to be applied to his chest to relieve the paroxysms of pain and of coughing. When the plaster was being put on his emaciated breast, Hood said, with the old-time twinkle in his eye: "That seems a great deal of mustard for so little meat."

It was in 1843 that Hood wrote "The Song of the Shirt." This poem and "The Bridge of Sighs" endeared him to the reformers of England; when in 1845 he died, all who were battling for better con-

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ditions for the poor felt that progress and humanity had sustained a great loss. Gerald Massey uttered the sentiment of tens of thousands in the following noble lines :

“He might have clutched the palm of Victory
In the world's wrestling-ring of noble deeds ;
But he went down a precious Argosy
At sea, just glimmering into sight of shore,
With its rare freightage from diviner climes.
While friends were crowding at the Harbour mouth
To meet and welcome the brave Sailor back,
He saw, and sank in sight of them and home !
The world may never know the wealth it lost,
When Hood went darkling to his tearful tomb,
So mighty in his undeveloped force !
With all his crowding unaccomplished hopes—
Th' unuttered wealth and glory of his soul—
And all the music ringing round his life,
And poems stirring in his dying brain.
But blessings on him for the songs he sang—
Which yearned about the world till then for birth !
How like a bonny bird of God he came,
And poured his heart in music for the Poor,
Who sit in gloom while sunshine floods the land,
And grope through darkness, for the hand of Help.
And trampled Manhood heard, and claimed its crown ;
And trampled Womanhood sprang up ennobled !”

Ebenezer Elliott had been, as has been said, the voice of one crying in the wilderness of special privilege “Prepare ye the way !” After he had

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written his poems of protest came the scholarly Charles Mackay, the poet of the Anti-Corn-Law League, and Gerald Massey, the radical prophet-poet of progress, who voiced the spirit of Chartism,—greater in power, in imagination, and in poetic feeling than either Elliott or Mackay. No story of the social movement of the 'forties of the nineteenth century would be complete that left out of the account the works of these two popular poets.

Charles Mackay was born in Scotland, though he was educated in London and in Brussels. From early youth he had been an omnivorous reader, and at school he excelled in mathematics. Later he showed aptitude for the languages, learning to write and speak French with the fluency of an educated Parisian. He mastered also German, and could speak Italian and Spanish. But the child who his delighted master had once predicted would become one of the most distinguished mathematicians of the age, turned to literature. His love for making verses, which took possession of him when he was still a little boy, seemed to increase with advancing years.

In 1832, when eighteen years of age, Mackay entered London in search of work. After a time he succeeded in obtaining a place on the *Daily Chronicle*; by the time the League had compelled

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the great papers of the realm to open their columns to the movement, he held an important post on its editorial staff. He soon became deeply interested in the work of the League, catching the moral enthusiasm that radiated from Richard Cobden, John Bright and other leaders. Mackay edited the Corn-Law and Free-Trade news department of the *Chronicle*; he also wrote many of the strongest editorials on these subjects that appeared in that great journal. Not content however with addressing the reason of his countrymen, he appealed to their sentiment and imagination in fable* and in verse.† His poems were greatly in vogue at the time, being circulated by tens of thousands. They were on the lips of the popular orators, and not a few of them were sung by the multitudes at the great League meetings that so excited the indignation of the Tories.

The rhymes of Mackay were far less radical, or defiant, in tone and spirit than were the trumpet calls of Gerald Massey. Indeed, the Scotch poet might be called a conservative agitator, paradoxical as the term may sound. He entertained scant sympathy for Chartism, or for the more aggressive

* See "The Tailor-ruled Land," in Appendix.

† See "Typical Poems and Songs of the Period of the Corn-Law and Chartist Agitations," in Appendix.

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and revolutionary spirit abroad at that time. He abhorred the employment of force ; on only one or two occasions does it appear that he was influenced by the swelling tide of revolt to such a degree as to express the possibility of the progressive movement ever requiring the use of the cannon-ball. His poems carry with them the inspiration that is born of a passionate love of justice and of human brotherhood. Most of them are full of faith in man and of hope for the future. They thus served to cheer and sustain the people during the long night-time that followed the various reverses encountered by the League.

Gerald Massey was incomparably the greatest of the poet-agitators. He possessed imagination, deep poetic feeling, and the prophet spirit as did none other of the people's rhymers of this period. His poems have proved a positive help and inspiration to all social reformers and friends of the people since they were penned. It is true they were for the most part written after the repeal of the Corn-Laws, and were inspired largely by the wide-spread revolution on the Continent that made 1848 so memorable, and which, in spite of its failure, furthered in many ways the idea of freedom throughout western Europe.

The ferment that led to the banishment of Giu-

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seppe Mazzini from Italy, and that which caused the exile of Karl Marx and of Richard Wagner from Germany, thrilled Massey and called forth some of the strongest and most moving didactic, or reformatory, lines to be found in Anglo-Saxon literature. Hence, though most of these poems were composed, as has just been said, after the great peaceful victory had been won that repealed the Corn Laws and gave England free trade in breadstuffs, they were part of the fruitage of the educational agitation begun by Chartism and the League, and properly belong to any story of this memorable struggle.

Gerald Massey was born into a home of extreme poverty. When he was only eight years of age we find him working twelve hours a day in a silk factory, and receiving for his services from eighteen to thirty-six cents a week. Yet even this small sum was needed to save the family from starvation. His own description of the bitter struggle of his boyhood is extremely pathetic. He knew, as few poets have known, what the poor suffer. He had felt their bitterness of soul, and chose to forego the fame and emolument that would have been his had he given himself solely to lyrical verse, pleasing to conventionalism, instead of stepping forth and joining the little band of chosen ones who preferred to

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fight for progress, for justice, and for popular happiness, even though they fought alone and suffered much. So long as there is injustice to be assailed, so long as there is uninvited poverty to be abolished, so long as Oppression and Wrong are enthroned in power, the prophet voice of Gerald Massey will thrill the hearts of those who feel for humanity and who consecrate their lives to its cause.

Massey was very bold in many of his expressions. No prophet who in olden times trod the burning sands of Palestine has arraigned in stronger or more biting terms the iniquities of conventionalism, or the injustice of many things in the social order. There are in Life scenes so tragic that the heart sickens when contemplating them, scenes that fill the soul with a nameless horror and make it cease to be a safe and sober counselor; but, like the prophet of old, it turns its wrath upon the slow-thinking multitude who impassively witness the old man's vain prayer for pauper-pay, the old woman's slow starvation, the virtual serfdom of the young men (who nevertheless create the bulk of the nation's wealth), and, more terrible than all, the helpless and revolting prostitution of the maidens. It is with this supreme tragedy before his eyes, that we find Mr. Massey in such poems as "Our Fathers are

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Praying for Pauper-pay,"* pouring forth words that are well calculated to startle alike the thoughtless rich and the slow-thinking poor.

In a time of social ferment, when larger views of life were opening before the mental vision of men, one can easily understand how such lines as these of Massey's stirred the popular imagination, and in how marked a degree they became an inspiration to thousands :

"'T is coming up the steep of Time,
And this old world is growing brighter!
We may not see its Dawn sublime,
Yet high hopes make the heart throb lighter!
Our dust may slumber under-ground
When it awakes the world in wonder;
But we have felt it gathering round!—
We have heard its voice of distant thunder!
'T is Coming! yes, 't is Coming!

"'T is coming now, that glorious time
Foretold by Seers, and sung in story,
For which, when thinking was a crime,
Souls leaped to heaven from scaffolds gory!
They passed. But lo! the work they've wrought,
Now the crowned hopes of Centuries blossom!
The lightning of their living thought
Is flashing through us, brain and bosom:
'T is Coming! yes, 't is Coming!

* See "Typical Poems and Songs of the Period of the Corn-Law and Chartist Agitations," in Appendix.

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The World will not forever bow
To things that mock God's own endeavour.
'T is nearer than they wot of now,
When Flowers shall wreath their Sword forever !
'T is Coming ! yes, 't is Coming !

"Fraternity ! Love's other name !
Dear, heaven-connecting link of being ;
Then shall we grasp thy golden dream,
As souls, full-statured, grow far-seeing :
Thou shalt unfold our better part,
And in our life-cup yield more honey ;
Light up with joy the Poor Man's heart,
And Love's own world with smiles more sunny !
'T is Coming ! yes, 't is Coming !"

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In these verses beginning with a fine apostrophe to Liberty, Massey reflected the cherished hope of millions of upward-striving souls :

"Immortal Liberty ! we see thee stand
Like Morn just stepped from heaven upon a mountain,
With beautiful feet, and blessing-laden hand,
And heart that welletth Love's most living fountain !
O ! when wilt thou draw from the People's lyre
Joy's broken chord ? and on the People's brow
Set Empire's crown ? light up thy Altar-fire
Within their hearts, with an undying glow ;
Nor give us blood for milk, as men are drunk with now ?

"Old legends tell us of a Golden Age,
When earth was guiltless,—Gods the guests of men,
Ere sin had dimmed the heart's illumined page,—

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And prophet-voices say 't will come again.
O! happy age! when love shall rule the heart,
And time to live shall be the poor man's dower,
When Martyrs bleed no more, nor Exiles smart,—
Mind is the only diadem of power.—
People, it ripens now! awake! and strike the hour.

“Hearts, high and mighty, gather in our cause;
Bless, bless, O God, and crown their earnest labour,
Who dauntless fight to win us Equal Laws,
With mental armour and with spirit-sabre!
Bless, bless, O God! the proud intelligence,
That now is dawning on the People's forehead,—
Humanity springs from them like incense,
The Future bursts upon them, boundless—starried—
They weep repentant tears, that they so long have tarried.”

As a rule, the sympathy of the clergy of the Church of England was strongly on the side of the Tories; but it was impossible that an educational agitation, carried on for a number of years and appealing primarily to the sense of right and justice, should fail to influence some of the more thoughtful and conscientious members of the clergy. Among the ripe scholars and finished writers who spoke for justice from the ranks of the Established Church, Frederick D. Maurice and Charles Kingsley call for special notice. They chose to imitate in a large way the life and teachings of the great Nazarene, rather than to follow in the wake of the conventional priesthood.

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Mr. Maurice was one of the noblest clergymen in the Church of England at that period. He was a scholar and a man of great ability. He might easily have won a commanding place in literature, or have risen high in the councils of the church, while enjoying a life of wealth, ease, and luxury; but he was too great a man to be seduced by the siren voice of conventionality. He had come under the influence of a new idea—or rather of an idea new to the church of that day. This idea is admirably expressed by Massey thus: "Humanity is one. The Eternal intends to show us that humanity is one. And the family is more than the individual member, the nation is more than the family, and the human race is more than the nation."

The Golden Rule, the Fatherhood of God, the Brotherhood of Man, the essential solidarity of the race, and the reciprocal dependence and responsibility of the units were fundamental facts in Maurice's religious belief. He was one of those brave teachers who insist on taking Jesus' lofty utterances in the Sermon on the Mount seriously; and holding these views he could not remain idle or silent when the poor were starving, when on every side there were multitudes of victims to unjust conditions and to the slavery of ignorance. He therefore drew round him a band of consecrated workers and began teach-

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ing in a systematic way the new social ideas in a somewhat modified form. He went far beyond the Anti-Corn-Law leaders, even beyond the Chartist manifesto, in advocating the formation of coöperative associations for the benefit of workers, and in promulgating the principles of Christian Socialism. In this great work he was ably seconded by his enthusiastic disciple, Charles Kingsley.

Before leaving Maurice, however, we must mention his great effort for the education and upliftment of the poor. He understood the peril of ignorance and the broadening, enriching and refining effect of sound education. Hence he set at work to bring its blessings within the reach of the artisans in the metropolis. Night schools were formed, and an extended work looking toward the general education of old and young was entered upon. Next he set at work to secure for the artisans the benefits of a college curriculum. His labors were ably seconded by other fine scholars, who gladly gave their services free, and by philanthropic men of means who generously aided the movement. Before long as a result of these labors two institutions, the Workingmen's College and the Queen's College for Women, were established. These institutions have wrought great good in the metropolis of England, and they have indirectly materially furthered the

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spread of education among the artisans in various centers throughout the English-speaking world.

Bolder and more outspoken than Maurice was his ardent disciple Charles Kingsley, who when still a young man came under the influence of the humanitarian sentiment of the age. Kingsley was born in 1819. He was graduated from Magdalene college, Cambridge, in 1842. Like Maurice, he felt that the minister of Christ should take the life and teachings of the great Exemplar seriously. He loved his fellow-men and sought to follow in the footsteps of the Master. The condition of the very poor among the farmers of England awakened a measureless sympathy in his heart. He knew that things were wrong in Church and in State when, with the life and teachings of the Founder of our religion ever before Christian England, such suffering should exist as everywhere met his eye.

In 1848 appeared Kingsley's first novel "Yeast." It dealt with the poverty prevailing among the agrarian population. He soon found, however, that conditions so revolting as to be almost inconceivable existed among the sweated tailors of London. The scenes that met his eye during his investigations there called forth a powerful protest entitled "Cheap Clothes and Nasty." They also served to make this clergyman of the State church, for a time at

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least, a radical among radicals. On one occasion he declared himself "a Church of England parson—and a Chartist." In sermon, in tract, and in story Kingsley sought to work a social revolution. "All systems of society," he once affirmed, "which favor the accumulation of capital in a few hands, which oust the masses from the soil which their forefathers possessed of old, which reduce them to the level of serfs and day-labourers living on wages and on alms, which crush them down with debt, or in any wise degrade and enslave them, or deny them a permanent stake in the commonwealth, are contrary to the kingdom of God which Jesus proclaimed."

In 1848 he wrote his strongest and most vital, though by no means his most finished, novel "Alton Locke,"—a story in which the reader is taken into the wretched environment of the victims of the sweating system in London, as Kingsley found it. Here the revolting filth and the wretched poverty of the unfortunate slaves of modern commercialism are brought home to the reader in a manner that is possible only when a writer has actually *seen* the bitter lot of the suffering ones, and when he also possesses a great, loving and sympathetic heart. The novel caught the fancy of the hour and sold by thousands, thus serving its author's great pur-

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pose, which was to arouse further public opinion to the injustice endured by the poor. It will be remembered that in one remarkable chapter of this novel Kingsley shows how the conditions of the very poor made Chartists. Had Kingsley written nothing but "Alton Locke," his life would have been grandly worth the while; though as a literary creation it is very faulty in many respects, as a conscience novel, as a voice speaking from the highway of progress and calling to the sluggish heart of the world, it is a great work—one of the most notable contributions of the 'forties of the nineteenth century to the literature of reform. Kingsley fought social and economic injustice on the ground that they were contrary to the teachings of Jesus.

With other devoted Church-of-England reformers, Charles Kingsley entered enthusiastically into a movement to further Christian Socialism. Much of the socialistic thought found to-day in the religious population of the Anglo-Saxon world had its origin—or at least received its first great impulse—from the writings and work of Frederick Maurice and Charles Kingsley. But Kingsley, like his friend and master in reform, was by no means content with simply promulgating his *beliefs* on social problems. He was ever ready to engage in any active *work* that promised practical results of a socialistic character.

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He assisted to the extent of his ability in an effort to establish coöperative shops, while he was one of the ablest scholars who gave their services gratuitously to the college work for the artisan class of which Maurice was the head and front.

Of Canon Kingsley's poetry and of his numerous prose works that were not distinctively reformatory in character it is not our purpose here to speak, further than to observe that *all* his writings breathe a highly religious and deeply humanitarian spirit. A lofty altruism that beautifully reflected the spirit and letter of the Sermon on the Mount, characterized his life and work. He was from first to last a faithful apostle of justice and of the higher moral law.

We cannot close this survey of the conscience-element in the literature of this period, without pausing a moment before the humble abode of an Italian exile—Giuseppe Mazzini—who came to London in 1837, and remained there until the stirring upheavals on the Continent of 1848. During the period of his sojourn in England by voice, by pen, and by personal example he contributed in no small degree to the moral and reforming forces at work on every side.

Mazzini was a young man when he arrived in London; he had not reached his thirty-second

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birthday.* Yet he had long been known as one of the great apostles of freedom in Europe. Tens if not hundreds of thousands of Italian patriots regarded him as the noblest incarnation of the republican spirit that had appeared since the Gracchi were overthrown; and if he was loved and idolized in every camp where freedom dwelt, he was also feared and hated as were but few men of the time by the upholders of despotism on the Italian peninsula.

Mazzini was born in Genoa. His parents were ardently attached to republican principles. His father was a physician by profession and a man of culture, possessing considerable means. The son was therefore enabled to enjoy the best educational advantages that his native city offered to the young. He early entered the university; in 1826 he graduated in law, having determined to adopt law and literature as his life work. His whole nature revolted against all forms of tyranny, bigotry, and oppression. Though he was one of the most deeply religious men of his age, he could not be held in thrall by the arbitrary dogmas of the dominant church of his land. In literature as well as in

* According to Mazzini himself, he was born in 1809. Dr. Thomas, in Lippincott's "Biographical Dictionary," gives the date of his birth as 1808; the Rev. J. S. Black, in the "Encyclopædia Britannica," says 1805.

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politics he was in open revolt, being as ardent a champion of romanticism in Italy as was Victor Hugo in France. Romanticism he regarded as a vital protest against literary servitude under the name of classicism. The conflict he characterized as "a war between the supporters of a literary despotism, dating its origin and authority two thousand years back, and those who thought to emancipate themselves from its tyranny in the name of their own individual inspiration." *

Literature exerted a deep fascination on the youth and sought to lure him along the road made glorious by so many noble Romans in the splendid past. But even before he left college he had yielded to a mightier spell than even seductive literature can cast. The glamour of the age had fallen over his soul. The seed-thoughts of liberty and free government scattered by Washington and our fathers had taken root all over civilization. France had shaken the thrones of western Europe. South America had broken from the old régime, and the names of Bolivar and of San Martin rose beside that of Washington, and gave to the New World a glory far greater than a triple crown. Into the active brain of Giuseppe Mazzini came the dream

* "Joseph Mazzini: His Life, Writings, and Political Principles,"
p. 5.

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of free Italy united and invincible under republican rule. He early affiliated himself with the Carbonari, a secret society then working somewhat blindly, but striving earnestly after the light of a freer day.

It is not infrequently the case, when a great truth takes possession of the imagination of a sincere youth, that it drives out all other thoughts and rules alone. Thus it was with Mazzini. Sadly he bade adieu to literature and engaged actively in the work of the order to which he had attached himself. Before long he was betrayed, denounced, arrested, and for six months imprisoned in the Fortress Savona, on the western Riviera. While here he became convinced that the association to which he belonged could never succeed, as it was based on negation. It aimed to destroy, but had no clear or definite constructive policy. He therefore formulated the plan for the great movement he afterwards organized, known as "Young Italy," and which did so much to kindle anew the republican spirit throughout the peninsula.

At length Mazzini was tried. The evidence against him was insufficient to convict; but he was forbidden to reside in Genoa, or to settle in any other large Italian city. Rather than brook the government surveillance he chose exile and retired to France, where he matured the plans formed while

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in prison for the establishment of the new order. Aided by a few devoted friends, he pushed the movement so vigorously that, in spite of the vigilance of the government, Italy was soon filled with associations working for the one great end blazoned in the words borne on their banner, "Liberty, Equality, Humanity, Independence, and Unity."

The method pursued in Mazzini's scheme was educational and insurrectionary. No man comprehended more clearly than did he the fact that education, and the arousing of the moral sentiment of a people, must precede any successful revolution or reconstruction of an old order. "Great revolutions," he wrote, "are the work rather of principles than of bayonets, and are achieved first in the moral, and afterwards in the material sphere. Bayonets are truly powerful only when they assert or maintain a right. The rights and duties of society spring from a profound moral sense which has taken root in the majority." *

For some time Marseilles was the revolutionary headquarters of "Young Italy"; but after being importuned by the Italian government France banished Mazzini, who then retired to Switzerland. Here also he was so effective in carrying forward

* "Joseph Mazzini: His Life, Writings, and Political Principles," p. 78.

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the great movement that the peninsular government prevailed upon the little republic to drive him forth. Thus it was that in 1837 the exile, with means exhausted and much depressed in spirit, came to London.

He had just passed through one of those great moral crises that come at times into the lives of highly sensitive and conscientious natures, after high hopes have been dashed to earth and all seems dark, —crises in which doubt fills the mind and despair peeps in at the windows of the soul; and this moral crisis, he tells us, was succeeded by a crisis of absolute poverty that lasted during the whole of '37 and half of '38. "I struggled on," he says, "in silence. I pledged, without the possibility of redeeming them, the few dear souvenirs, either of my mother or others, which I possessed; then things of less value; until one Saturday I found myself obliged to carry an old coat and a pair of boots to one of the pawn-broker shops, crowded on Saturday evenings by the poor and fallen, in order to obtain food for the Sunday. . . . I passed, one by one, through all those trials and experiences; bitter enough at any time, but doubly so when they have to be encountered by one living solitary, uncounselled, and lost amid the immense multitude of men unknown to him, in a country where pov-

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erty—especially in a foreigner—is an argument for a distrust often unjust, sometimes cruel.” *

At length it became noised about in London that the great Italian patriot was in the city, and in sore need. England has never been wanting in loyal and devoted friends of freedom, and some of these sought out Mazzini and interested themselves in him in a substantial way. Through them he was introduced in literary circles, and leading reviews commissioned him to prepare papers for them. Here, too, he came into friendly relationship with many of those who represented conscience in the literature of the age. How highly the author of “The French Revolution” esteemed him may be judged from the following extract from a letter addressed by Carlyle, under date June 15, 1844, to the London *Times* :

“I have had the honour to know Mr. Mazzini for a series of years, and, whatever I may think of his practical insight and skill in worldly affairs, I can with great freedom testify to all men that he, if ever I have seen one such, is a man of genius and virtue, a man of sterling veracity, humanity, and nobleness of mind, one of those rare men, numerable, unfortunately, but as units in this world, who are worthy to be called martyr souls; who, in silence, piously in their daily life, understand and practise what is meant by that.” †

* “Joseph Mazzini: His Life, Writings and Political Principles,” pp. 204–205.

† See William Clarke’s sketch of Mazzini, in the Introduction to “Essays by Mazzini,” published by Walter Scott, London.

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With Mazzini life was a mission, and duty divine. His whole conscientious existence served to illustrate the living faith that burned on the altar of his soul. It was the profound conviction of his heart that he expressed in the following words :

“Life is a mission. Every other definition of life is false, and leads all who accept it astray. Religion, science, philosophy, though still at variance upon many points, all agree in this, that every existence is an aim. Were it not so, of what avail were the movement, the progress, which all are beginning to recognize as the Law of life? And that aim is one: to develop and bring into action all the faculties which constitute and lie dormant in human nature—Humanity—and cause them harmoniously to combine toward the discovery and application of that law. . . . Life is a mission; duty, therefore, its highest law. In the comprehension of that mission, and fulfilment of that duty, lies our means of future progress, the secret of the stage of existence into which we shall be initiated at the conclusion of this earthly stage. Life is immortal; but the method and time of evolution through which it progresses is not in our own hands. Each of us is bound to purify his own soul as a temple; to free it from egotism; to set before himself, with a religious sense of the importance of the study, the problem of his own life; to search out what is the most striking, the most urgent need of the men by whom he is surrounded; then interrogate his own faculties and capacity, and resolutely and unceasingly apply them to the satisfaction of that need.” * . . .

“From the idea of God I descended to the conception of progress; from the conception of progress to a true conception of life; to faith in a mission and its logical consequence—duty the supreme rule of life; and having reached that faith, I swore to myself that nothing

* “Joseph Mazzini: His Life, Writings, and Political Principles,” pp. 198–200.

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in this world should again make me doubt or forsake it." * . . .

"The faith which should guide us shines forth, I think, . . . in these few words of another Polish poet . . . ,—Skarga,—which I have often repeated to myself: 'The threatening steel flashes before our eyes, and wretchedness awaits us on the path; yet the Lord hath said: "Onwards, onwards without rest." But whither go we, O Lord? "Go on and die, ye who are bound to die; go on and suffer, ye who are bound to suffer."'" †

A man who laid life's richest gifts upon the altar of duty, who sacrificed home, friends, native land, fame, glory and ease, and elected to become a wanderer and an exile, to live upon the crust of poverty, so long as he was at all times true to such exalted convictions as those expressed above, could not fail to be a power in London at a time when the moral energies of the people were everywhere aroused, especially as he moved among men of conviction. Nor was this all. An incident occurred in 1844 that served to call the attention of the whole nation to Mazzini, and awakened a deep interest in him, while it aroused further the popular sentiment against the government and thus augmented the general discontent.

At the instigation of the government of Naples, the postal authorities of England began tampering with Mazzini's mail. At length his suspicions were aroused. He became convinced that his letters

* *Ibid.*, pp. 202-203.

† *Ibid.*, p. 202.

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were being opened by the authorities; but so cleverly was the duplication of seals and the stamping done, that it was hard to get the evidence necessary to sustain so grave a charge. The friends to whom he stated his convictions were incredulous. They did not believe that the government would dare violate the sanctity of the mails. At length however Mazzini, after setting several traps, secured evidence of an indisputable character. Then one of his friends in Parliament volunteered to question the government, and to petition for an investigation. The charge created a great sensation, and the ministers were assailed by questions from all sides of the most embarrassing character. At first they sought refuge in evasions; but finding this useless they confessed, justifying themselves however by claiming that they had acted under permission granted by an act passed in the reign of Queen Anne. A tempest of popular indignation ensued, and Sir James Graham the chief offender sought to justify himself by maligning Mazzini. But the Italian was not a man to be browbeaten, even though poor and in exile. He confuted the calumnies so effectively that the offending minister was compelled to apologize publicly to the House of Commons for circulating the libelous statements.

This controversy created a national interest in

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Mazzini; a knowledge of his high aims, of his noble purposes and of his exalted teachings spread through the realm. Thousands who had before known nothing of his life now became eager to learn more of this wonderful young man who loved freedom and the people more than all those things usually esteemed most, while a general sympathy was felt for him by the nation that felt humiliated at the ignoble part played by its government. And thus it chanced that even an exile aided by his presence and by his message in the great educational movement.

But Mazzini was never content with being merely a teacher. He was an apostle of service. He found in London hundreds of little ignorant Italian boys. He soon interested friends in their behalf, and was the means of establishing a school where every night and on Sunday the children were gratuitously taught. He was a tireless worker. He wrote much; he discussed the great questions uppermost in his mind; he sought out the poor and ignorant; and thus, from early to late, he labored for others, his very life being an inspiration to all who knew him.

These were some of those who sowed the seeds of justice, and held up the larger and nobler ideal of freedom before the conscience of England, in the 'forties of the last century. Of this number Richard

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Cobden, John Bright, Elizabeth Barrett, Charles Mackay, Gerald Massey, Charles Kingsley, Charles Dickens, and Giuseppe Mazzini were all young. At the time of the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837 the oldest of the group, Mr. Cobden, was but thirty-three years of age. They brought into the battle for the larger life the splendid courage and enthusiasm of youth, and exemplified again the fact, of which history affords many illustrations, that progress waits upon the young men and young women of an age, to whom Civilization turns in the hour of supreme need. If the youth of a nation be clean-souled, strong in faith and hope, while cherishing high ideals, the nation has little to fear. Who shall say how much civilization owes to the young men of England, in the 'thirties and 'forties of that century, who stood up in the face of apparently overwhelming opposition and fought for progress and for justice, in so doing educating the conscience of the nation to such a degree that practical advance became comparatively easy?

CHAPTER VI.

"CARRYING THE WAR INTO AFRICA"

Disappointment in Melbourne Ministry—Mr. Wood of Manchester—Parliamentary Tactics—Agitators' Troubles—Postal Reform—A Tory Ministry—Cobden in Parliament—Compact between Cobden and John Bright—The Press opens its Columns—Thomas Moore—Thomas Campbell—The Year 1844—Absurd Remedies Proposed.

THE VIGOROUS and aggressive campaign opened by the Anti-Corn-Law League, the rising tide of discontent everywhere perceptible, the desperate condition of the poor as revealed by Parliamentary investigations, and the blossoming of the humanitarian spirit apparent in the literature of the day led the more sanguine of the reformers to look for prompt and radical action on the part of the Melbourne ministry. They believed that a bold, strong and defiant stand in favor of free trade in grain taken by the government, would electrify the nation to such an extent as to lift the Liberal ministry again into the popular favor that had been lost by its timid, halting and

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uncertain policy. Lord Melbourne, however, was in no sense a Moses. He was the last man to reinstate his party in public affection by taking a radical position on the great social, political and economic questions that were at that time threatening to convulse the kingdom; and thus the hopes of those reformers who had anticipated early action on the Corn Laws were doomed to disappointment.

At the opening of Parliament, in 1839, Lord Melbourne stated that he was not prepared to pledge himself to any alteration in the Corn Laws. This discouraging announcement was quickly followed by an incident that greatly exasperated the reformers. The Melbourne ministry, wishing to conciliate the discontented manufacturers, had selected Mr. Wood, chairman of the chamber of commerce of Manchester, to second the Queen's address. In his speech this gentleman expressed the conviction that the Corn Laws should be repealed, as a matter of good policy no less than of justice. But, passing from this, he deliberately proceeded to state that the manufacturing interests were by no means suffering; they were, he contended, in a state of progressive prosperity. Here at one blow he had given a sweeping denial to one of the strongest and most effective arguments of the League. Sir Robert

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Peel, the leader of the Opposition, was at that time regarded as the special champion of the Corn Laws. He quickly appreciated the fatal blunder of the gentleman from Manchester, and promptly congratulated him on his clear and convincing presentation of the facts concerning the manufacturing interests, proceeding to observe that “it was one of the ablest and most conclusive speeches in favor of the existing system which it had been his good fortune to hear.”

We can readily imagine the indignation and dismay with which Mr. Wood’s speech was received, by Manchester as well as by the League. He was promptly removed from the chairmanship of the chamber of commerce, and the reformers at once set at work to push forward with redoubled vigor the campaign.

On the nineteenth of February, Mr. Villiers moved that evidence be received by the House in regard to the baleful effects of the Corn Laws on agriculture, as well as on trade and manufactures. But facts were precisely what the Tories and the unconverted Whigs did not wish to hear. The motion was lost by an overwhelming majority. Mr. Villiers, however, was not a man of dough; he knew that every time the measure was debated or presented the Corn Laws were weakened, because

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they were bad measures and opposed to justice, and to the prosperity and happiness of the people. Hence he moved that the House resolve itself into a committee of the whole to consider the laws that regulated the importation of corn. The question was debated early in March. Five days were given to its consideration. When the vote was taken the motion was rejected by three hundred and forty-two to one hundred and ninety-five. A majority of one hundred and forty-seven votes was well calculated to dampen the ardor of the reformers !

But the League, appreciating the importance of aggressive work, immediately renewed its campaign with increased energy. Speakers were sent forth to all sections of the country to proclaim the new economic gospel, and the nation was literally sown in leaflets, catechisms, tracts, and pamphlets. The reformers had early determined to avoid such extreme utterances and appeals to passion as had previously resulted in disturbance and bloodshed, and had given the government a pretext for interfering with the Chartist agitation ; but they soon found that even the most fair, reasonable and modest presentation of their cause so aroused those interested in upholding the Corn Laws that the lives of the agitators were by no means safe, while the authorities, not content with seeking to obstruct

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their work, actually resorted in certain cases to an abuse of power in order to break the influence of the League. The press of the country, through constant misrepresentation, abuse and puerile sophistries, sought to delude when it was not engaged in exciting the passions and the prejudices of its readers.

The economic missionaries, though they were well received and gained ground in Scotland, met in England with strong opposition ; they soon learned how stubbornly and desperately the beneficiaries of special privilege will fight for the interests that bring in a golden return. They were threatened and sometimes mobbed ; halls were denied them to speak in, and they were arrested and fined for speaking in the market-places. Meetings were sometimes broken up, and often interfered with, by persons bent on creating disturbance. Innkeepers were afraid to house the speakers, lest they lose their customers or forfeit their lease ; printers were afraid to set up poster announcements of League meetings. The following are some typical examples of the opposition encountered :

At Arundel the mayor would not permit the use of the town-hall, on the ground that the addresses would make the laborers discontented ; and a reward was offered by a land-owning farmer to anyone who

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would throw the speaker into the river. At Louth, after permission to use the town-hall had been given and then withdrawn, the speakers secured a gig and delivered their lecture from it in the market-place; but before leaving the town they were arrested and fined for obstructing the highway. At Huntingdon the meeting was riotously broken up by a number of people under the leadership of the town clerk. At Worksop the lecturer was brutally assaulted by hired bullies in the street. But perhaps nowhere was a more lawless spirit manifested than in the great university town of Cambridge. Mr. Morley, in referring to this outrage, observes :

“It was reserved for a seat of learning to show that no brutality can equal that which is engendered of the union of the violent inherited prejudice of the educated classes with the high spirits of youth. No creature is a more unbridled ruffian than the ruffian undergraduate can be, and at Cambridge the peaceful arguments of the lecturer were interrupted by a destructive and sanguinary riot. The local newspaper afterwards piously congratulated the furious gownsmen on having done their duty as ‘the friends of good government and the upholders of the religious institutions of the country.’ ” *

The exhibitions of the spirit of lawlessness and intolerance were not surprising in view of the attitude of the conventional press. Mr. Morley, in speaking of this phase of the struggle, says :

* John Morley, “Life of Richard Cobden,” p. 19.

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“A long campaign of reckless and virulent calumny was at once opened in the party organs. One London newspaper described the worst members of the Association as unprincipled schemers, and the best as self-conceited socialists. Another declared with authority that it was composed in equal parts of commercial swindlers and political swindlers. A third with edifying unction denounced their sentiments as subversive of all moral right and order, their organization as a disloyal faction, and their speakers as revolutionary emissaries, whom all peaceable and well-disposed persons ought to assist the authorities in peremptorily putting down. The *Morning Post*, the journal of London idleness, hailed the Manchester workers in a style that would have been grotesque enough, if only it had not represented the serious thought of many of the most important people in the dominant class. ‘The manufacturing people exclaim, “Why should we not be permitted to exchange the produce of our industry for the greatest quantity of food which that industry will anywhere command?” To which we answer, Why not, indeed? Who hinders you? Take your manufactures away with you, by all means, and exchange them anywhere you will from Tobolsk to Timbuctoo. If nothing will serve you but to eat foreign corn, away with you, you and your goods, and let us never see you more!’ This was a quarter from which the language of simpletons was to be expected, but as the repealers had a thousand opportunities of discovering within the next seven years, the language of simpletons has many dialects.” *

In Parliament the Melbourne ministry, which had become somewhat unpopular even before the death of William IV., steadily lost the confidence of the electors. Many excellent reform measures had been passed by this ministry, but in no instance after the reign of Victoria began did they offer an

* Morley’s “Life of Cobden,” pp. 19–20.

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economic reform bill of any importance. Indeed, it had never been till the demands for an advance step had become so loud and unmistakable that the government could no longer ignore them, that any such step had been taken. Hence the ministry had received but little credit for laws that the people felt had been wrung from them.

The reform in the postal service, introduced during the Melbourne ministry, calls however for notice, because of its far-reaching and beneficent influence upon society throughout the civilized world. "Perhaps," observes one writer, "it represents the greatest social improvement brought about in modern times." Unfortunately for the fame of the Liberal ministry this reform, like others, came only after outside pressure had compelled the government to act. Indeed the proposed reform, when clearly and ably outlined by Rowland Hill, called forth the bitterest opposition from the postal department; the innovations were adopted by the government only after over two thousand petitions had been sent in to the House of Commons, and public pressure from every part of the realm had been brought to bear upon the ministry. The bill that served to bring order out of chaos, establishing a rational and scientific system in place of a crude, burdensome and unscientific one, became a law in 1839; and by its

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practical working England soon assumed the position of the world's leader in the vitally important postal service.

This great reform measure was revolutionary in character. It followed closely the clear recommendations that had been set forth by Rowland Hill in 1837. The principal features of the measure were uniform postal tariff-rates; reductions in postage to a penny on each half-ounce; greater speed in the conveyance of letters; greater frequency in the despatch; the abolition of parliamentary franking privileges; and the prepayment of postage on letters. The postage-stamp was introduced some months after the reforms just named. Before the revolution of the system different prices had been charged between different localities, the postage varying from four pence to one shilling eight pence on a single letter; if more than one sheet was sent, no matter how thin the paper, the letter required double postage. The average postage on inland letters was about nine pence. The receiver was compelled to pay the postage, a provision that worked great injustice and hardship in many cases. Members of Parliament were permitted to frank letters, and this led in many instances to great abuses, as many members were not above selling their franks and thus defrauding the government.

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The reform was bitterly opposed by the postal officials ; they declared that it would work the ruin of the service, that it was impracticable, visionary and ridiculous. Yet, in spite of all opposition, the great progressive step proposed by Hill was taken ; and from that day to this the postal service of Great Britain has moved steadily forward, making greater and more beneficent advances than has any other department of the English government.

Important as was this forward step, it exerted no immediate or special influence upon the discontented masses. The unrest of the time sprang from the misery and wretchedness of the poor, from stagnation in business, from monopoly in food, from the denial to the workers of all voice in the government, and from other causes that appealed immediately to the popular imagination. Few reformers gave the postal service any serious consideration ; and thus, even had the Liberal ministry introduced the reform before public opinion compelled the step, it would have exerted but little influence in checking the increasing disfavor in which the government stood with the public. One section of the community demanded the immediate abolition of the Corn Laws ; another very considerable body insisted upon electoral concessions. These were the vital issues in the opinion of the manufacturing

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classes and the artisans, as well as of the poor of England. And, unfortunately for the Liberal ministry, there was a growing conviction among the poor that the Whigs were as indifferent to their welfare as the Tories were. Discontent, as we have already observed, was rife, and the party in power at times of general unrest always receives the blame for whatever goes wrong or is unpopular. The *mishaps* and the *blunders* of the ministry also contributed largely to its growing unpopularity. Its strength diminished till, on the fourth of June, 1841, Sir Robert Peel forced a vote on a want-of-confidence motion that he had introduced. The ministry was discredited and an appeal made to the electors, with the result that the Tories carried the country by a substantial majority. At this time, however, Richard Cobden was elected to the House of Commons, and thus the little radical band in Parliament was reinforced by the accession of the most persuasive reformer of the time.

It was in 1841 also that the work of the League received a powerful impetus in one of those strange and unforeseen occurrences that not infrequently come to the aid of great movements at critical times, and which may be compared to mighty tributaries suddenly pouring swiftly flowing and compulsive waters into broad but sluggish streams; incidents

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that thoughtless men call chance happenings, but which appear to be part of a Divine plan to those who believe there is no such thing as the caprice of chance, and who hold with Lowell that, so long as the children of Progress are at all points faithful to their charge—

“ behind the dim unknown,
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own.”

This fortunate occurrence was the solemn compact, to which I have already alluded, made between Richard Cobden and John Bright, to consecrate their lives to the cause until it became victorious.*

* Although the incident that caused Mr. Bright's entrance into the Anti-Corn-Law conflict has already been briefly told, it will perhaps be not amiss to quote here the ampler and touching description of the event given by the great orator himself. The decision he then made marked not only the supreme moment in the life of this illustrious man, but also the entrance upon a public career of one of the greatest moral influences that has been felt in the English Parliament for generations. “It was,” said Mr. Bright, “in September, in the year 1841. The sufferings throughout the country were fearful; and you who live now, but were not of age to observe what was passing in the country then, can have no idea of the state of your country in that year. . . . At that time I was at Leamington, and I was, on the day when Mr. Cobden called upon me—for he happened to be there at the time on a visit to some relatives—I was in the depths of grief, I might almost say of despair; for the light and sunshine of my house had been extinguished. All that was left on earth of my young wife, except the memory of a sainted life and of a too brief happiness, was lying still and cold in the chamber above us. Mr. Cobden called upon me as his friend, and addressed me, as you might suppose, with words of condolence. After a time he looked up and said, ‘There are thousands of houses in England at this moment where wives, mothers and children are dying of hunger. Now,’ he said, ‘when the first par-

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Seldom in the history of our prosaic modern time has there been seen a more inspiring picture than that presented by these two apostles of progress and civilization, one with eye lighted by that enthusiasm which is kindled only when a lofty soul has been overmastered by the might of a great moral truth, and the other smitten by a grievous sorrow that had touched the deeper wellsprings of his being, and made it possible for him to feel for every starving man, woman and child in England as if the dying one were in his own desolate home. In speaking of this strange spectacle Mr. Morley observes :

“The picture of two plain men leaving their homes and their business, and going over the length and the breadth of the land to convert the nation, had about it something apostolic : it presented something so far removed from the stereotyped ways of political activity, that this circumstance alone, apart from the object for which they were pleading, touched and affected people, and gave a certain dramatic interest to the long pilgrimages of the two men who had only become orators because they had something to say, which they were intent on bringing their hearers to believe, and which happened to be true, wise, and just.” *

oxysm of your grief is past, I would advise you to come with me, and we will never rest till the Corn Law is repealed.’ I accepted his invitation. I knew that the description he had given of the homes of thousands was not an exaggerated description. I felt in my conscience that there was a work that somebody must do, and therefore I accepted his invitation, and from that time we never ceased to labour hard on behalf of the resolution which we had made.” (Morley’s “Life of Cobden,” p. 24.)

* Morley’s “Life of Cobden,” p. 24.

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“For seven years,” says Mr. Bright, “the discussion on that one question—whether it was good for a man to have half a loaf or a whole loaf—for seven years the discussion was maintained, I will not say with doubtful result, for the result was never doubtful, and never could be in such a cause; but for five years or more we devoted ourselves without stint; every working hour almost was given up to the discussion and to the movement in connection with this question.” *

The agitation of the League had been so vigorous, that some time before the election of Mr. Cobden several of the great dailies opened their columns to the new movement. In London the most influential of these journals was the *Daily Chronicle*. On its staff were many of the brightest young men in Great Britain—among them Charles Mackay, the poet and journalist; Charles Dickens, a Parliamentary reporter, even then beginning to attract the attention of editors by his inimitable sketches; also Thomas Moore and Thomas Campbell, the poets. To Charles Mackay was assigned the work of editing the Corn-Law column, and also of preparing many of the *Chronicle's* leaders on free trade and kindred subjects.

Thomas Moore's connection with the *Chronicle* began in 1841. He was to contribute a poem a

* *Ibid.*, p. 24.

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week on topics of the hour. The author of “Lalla Rookh” was an ardent free trader; after the *Chronicle* grew kind, he wrote verses on the Corn Laws that were widely copied. Like many others of the reformers, Moore in 1842 was led to think that Sir Robert Peel was veering rapidly from the position of leader of the protectionist party to that of an advocate of free trade; and, like many other students of public problems at that time, he believed that the fast rising tide in favor of repeal throughout England would force the government to accede at an early day to the popular demand for cheap bread and repeal the odious class-laws. The poet made the common mistake of reformers in supposing that long-entrenched money interests could be overthrown before the conscience and the reason of the nation had been so aroused as to make powerless the innumerable devices of the Opposition. On the twenty-third of February, 1842, he published some verses entitled “Threnody on the Approaching Death of Old Mother Corn Law,” the opening lines of which are as follows:

“I see, I see, it is coming fast,
Our dear old Corn Law’s doom is cast!
That ancient Lady, of high degree,
Is as near her end as she well can be;
And much will all vulgar eaters of bread
Rejoice, when they see her fairly dead.

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For never, from ancient Medea down
To the late Mrs. Brownrigg, of bad renown,
Has any old dame been known, they aver,
Who could starve and carve poor folks like her.
But, dear old damsel, they wrong her sadly,
'T was all by the law she behaved so badly ;
And God forbid, whate'er the event,
That free-born Britons should e'er repent
Wrongs done by Act of Parliament.

“But *is* it, indeed, then come to this,
After all our course of high-bred bliss ?
Poor, *dear* old Corn Law !—prop of the Peers,
And glory of Squires, through countless years,
Must all thy structure of Pounds and Pence,
Like another Babylon, vanish hence ?
Must towering Prices and Rents sublime,
Thus topple, like turrets touch'd by time,—
And all, for what ? that each shirtless oaf,
May bolt, for breakfast, a larger loaf !
For this one vulgar purpose alone
Is all this inelegant mischief done.”

Thomas Campbell's duties were very similar to Moore's. He was expected to produce a metrical contribution at least once a week. Among some stanzas entitled “Tory Logic,” by this popular poet, we find the following :

“Our Corn Laws that make us so wealthy,
Against them how dare you complain ?
Your landlords, to make the poor healthy,
Are temperance teachers *in grain*.”

“Carrying the War into Africa”

Nothing in literature is more disappointing than the work of a poet whose rhymes are made to order. In all literary production, it is perhaps true that the highest degree of excellence is reached only when the heart informs the art; and in poetry, as nowhere else, it is not till the emotional depths are stirred that the imagination quickens into beauty. A poet whose creations have justly entitled him to a high place among the writers of his time, makes frequently a sorry showing when he attempts to compose verses on some subject that has not deeply appealed to his emotional nature. The above examples from the authors of “Lalla Rookh” and of “The Pleasures of Hope” give impressive illustration of this fact. It is indeed only on rare occasions, when a true prophet-poet—that is, a poet whose imagination is peculiarly sensitive to the moral verities—is deeply stirred by some moral wrong, that it seems possible to infuse the true poetic spirit into this kind of didactic verse. It may indeed be conceded that poetry on economic problems is pretty hard to write. Yet poor as were the so-called poems from the literary standpoint, they proved immensely effective in their influence upon the people; for, in spite of the lame meter and the deplorable rhymes, the verses seemed to find their way into the hearts of the populace, who

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apparently were incapable of grasping and understanding cold logic.

Sir Robert Peel, though destined to immortalize himself as that English statesman of the 'forties of the nineteenth century who dared to "desert his party to save his nation," was by no means ready to make this move, which might mean political suicide, so early as 1842. Still his reform of the tariff served to encourage the drooping spirits of the League, though Mr. Cobden and other leading members seemed at that time to fail to appreciate the value to the masses of such important measures as the Income Tax, which signalized Sir Robert Peel's aggressive policy—a policy that from first to last was full of surprises, when we remember that the prime minister was the leader of the Tories.

In 1844 considerable uneasiness was felt by some of the leading members of the nobility, whose princely incomes were due largely to the protection afforded by the Corn Laws. It was true that the good crops and other influences had served to strengthen the Tories, and, though many leading Whig statesmen had come out in favor of repeal, the party did not show any disposition to take so radical a step. But these men with large interests at stake and possessing, as many of them did, a

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wide knowledge of history as well as a clear understanding of the profound discontent smouldering under the smooth surface of society, believed that, unless the public mind could be diverted from the Corn Laws before a period of depression arrived, the immensely valuable monopoly would be swept away in spite of all opposition, even as the Reform Bill had been enacted in spite of an overwhelming majority against its passage in the House of Lords. “It was amusing,” says Mr. Mackay, “to note how the chiefs of the protectionist party attempted to draw the masses of the people to their side, on a false scent; how, as was said at the time, they drew red herrings across the path, to bewilder the dogs of public opinion, and let the fox of Food Monopoly escape.” *

The Opposition began by resolutely denying the existence of the deplorable condition of the poor, of the widespread discontent; and finally in 1845 the existence of the potato-rot, which was then destroying the staple crop of Ireland, was denied even after almost every intelligent person knew the potato famine to be a terrible fact. Thus we find the Duke of Cambridge, one of the most solicitous of the nobility for the maintenance of the Corn Tax, declaring positively that “the report of a

* Mackay’s “Forty Years’ Recollections,” vol. I., p. 262.

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potato famine was false"; while the Duke of Rutland "deplored the skyey influences at work in England, which made one person out of every three a croaker."

The time came at length, however, when the popular pastime of denouncing as dangerous and unscrupulous demagogues and revolutionists all who insisted that the people were starving could no longer be indulged in; for the nation not only knew the facts, but had begun to *feel* them. The long agitation, in which truths had been piled upon truths and appeal had been added to appeal, at last had had its effect upon a people in whom the conscience had long been to a certain extent anæsthetized by the power of wealth, of caste, of custom, of laws, and of ancient privileges.

When, therefore, the facts of the contention could no longer be ignored, the upholders of special privileges came forward with explanations and with remedies, all of which were pitifully inadequate, while some were so palpably silly as to render it difficult to believe that they were seriously advanced by noblemen claiming the possession of ordinary wit.

Thus, for example, Lord John Manners became suddenly impressed with the idea that the widespread discontent of the workmen in the cities was

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due chiefly to the change from rural to urban life that had long been going on. In the old England he imagined there was never such unrest and discontent, for then the people lived in the country and enjoyed Arcadian life, with an abundance of simple pastimes such as “leap-frog and cricket.” So possessed was this nobleman with the idea that he had found a panacea, that he inflicted a long poem on the subject upon an unappreciative public; and, as if this were not enough, he prepared a lengthy pamphlet in which he urged the government to “look to the sports of the people, and lay out grounds for cricket and leap-frog.”

Another beneficiary of the Corn Laws made what seemed to him to be a discovery. The poor, he found, were not as welcome in the house of God as were the rich, and here he believed lay the cause of the discontent. The rich, he observed, enjoyed soft pews in the house of prayer by paying for them, while the poor “had too often to stand during the whole religious service.” Hence he raised the cry, “Away with the pews!”—as though their abolition would fill the stomachs of the half-starved workers who were unable to buy the whole loaf because of the iniquitous Corn Laws.

The Duke of Richmond, though he would not

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entertain the idea of repealing the Corn Laws, recognized the fact that the occasion was critical. He therefore proposed that the rich landlords purchase potatoes in Portugal and dole them out as charity to the starving population. At a county meeting held in Sussex the duke observed that, though throughout different parts of Europe the potato crop had proved a failure, he was informed that in Portugal there had never been a better crop. Hence he urged that, "if there should be a failure in this country, there would be no difficulty in bringing potatoes from that country to this at a price which, though the labourer cannot pay, we (the land-owners) ought and will." *

The leaders of the League met this seemingly generous proposition by a series of questions that showed the true intent of the nobleman's palliative remedy. Why, they asked, should it be right and proper to buy foreign potatoes, yet wrong to permit the poor to purchase foreign corn? Why did the duke insist on preventing the people from buying Russian wheat, and yet propose to give them Portuguese potatoes as an act of charity? The answer was obvious: The amount that the nobleman would pay for the potato charity would

* Mackay's "Forty Years' Recollections," vol. I., p. 267.

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be but a fraction of the profits that he realized from his grain monopoly.

It remained for the Duke of Norfolk, however, to outdo all those who were so actively striving to save the Corn Laws with a proposition so absurd that it caused even the reluctant Tories to join in the laughter of the nation. Like the Duke of Richmond, he would not for a moment harbor the thought of meeting the emergency presented in the potato famine by favoring the opening of the ports to free grain for the people. At the same time, he had a remedy that he presented at the very meeting in Sussex at which the Duke of Richmond's potato charity had been exploited. In his address the Duke of Norfolk said :

“In consequence of the badness of the potatoes, they should pay more attention to the labourer this year than ordinarily. There was one thing,—it was suggested in a letter by a lady the other day,—a thing which certainly was very warm and comfortable to the stomachs of the people if it could be got cheap. He endeavoured the other day when he was in London to buy it. He went to several places to enquire, and he bought a pound or two of it. But there was some difficulty attached to it rather than otherwise. They had not been accustomed to it, and might not like it. He liked it however himself. In India it was to the people what potatoes were in Ireland. He meant Curry Powder. It might be smiled at at first, but it was a very warming thing for potatoes and things of that description. Now, if the gentlemen would try it as he had done, merely *taking a pinch and putting it into hot water*—he did not mean to say that would make a soup—a very good one; but *when a man came*

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*home and took this and had nothing better, it would make him warm at his stomach, and he could go to bed better and more comfortable. He might be ridiculed hereafter for what he was saying, but he did not care one rap."**

Such were a few of the selfish or purblind propositions with which the advocates of the Corn Monopoly sought to hush the demand for simple justice and to stay the rising tide of human interest evoked by the Chartists and the Anti-Corn-Law League, and which were at this time beating against the intelligence and the conscience of England so powerfully that even the dumbest and the most indifferent saw that something must be done.

* Mackay's "Forty Years' Recollections," vol. I., p. 266.

CHAPTER VII.

THE DARK HOUR BEFORE THE DAWN

Beginning of 1845—The Income Tax—Bread Plentiful—Interest
Waning—Cobden's great Speech—Foretells Success.

THE year 1845 opened gloomily for the League. There seemed to be a combination of circumstances against the cause that it had battled for so valiantly, chief among which was the growing popularity of the Tories, the stalwart upholders of the Corn Laws. The enactment of the Income Tax and of some reform tariff measures by Sir Robert Peel had produced a strong sentiment in his favor among the masses. They compared these really reformative measures of the Tories, which were so well calculated to lessen the burdens of taxation long borne by the poor, with the timidity and the indifference that had characterized the Melbourne ministry during the last years of its administration. It was claimed that the Tories, who represented the landed and aristocratic influences, had shown far more interest in

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the condition of the poor than the Liberals had done, though the latter claimed to be their special friends.

The real relief felt from Sir Robert Peel's excellent reform measures, however, was insignificant in comparison with the influence exerted on the condition of the people by nature. For many years Mr. Cobden and other leading reformers had declared that, with an abundance of grain at a low price, the discontent and unrest of the people would abate, that work would increase, and prosperity return; and during the last two years England had enjoyed enormous harvests. The price of bread had fallen. Men with full stomachs found work and began to hope again. The prediction of Cobden and his associates was verified; but this very fact operated against the Anti-Corn-Law League.

The people then as now looked only at the surface. They had been hungry under the Liberal ministry; the Tories had given them some salutary reform legislation, they were now able to get cheap bread, and their condition had improved: therefore the Tories, they reasoned, were the true statesmen. And with this conclusion—fallacious because it ignored the chief cause of the better times—the masses turned from the League,

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and were clearly disposed to let well enough alone. They would support the Tories because better times had been coincident with their administration.

With this outlook and the result, an overwhelming Tory majority in both houses of Parliament, the zeal of many Leaguers grew cold. True, the contributions came in liberally; but otherwise a general lethargy was everywhere apparent. The literature of the League, which a few years before had been eagerly sought for and read with avidity, was no longer in demand. Their great meetings lacked the old-time enthusiasm and numbers. Even Cobden was beginning to bore the house with his constant assaults on the Corn Laws, while John Bright was regarded by the Opposition as a dangerous incendiary.

Though amid all these discouragements Cobden's faith did not falter, his health was rapidly giving way, while his private fortune had become seriously embarrassed. For years he had neglected his own personal business that the larger blessing of national prosperity might be enjoyed by the people; and he now stood on the brink of what seemed to be irretrievable ruin.

There were rifts however in the cloud. *All* who listened to Cobden were not tired of his clear,

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earnest, logical and masterly addresses. Among his auditors was a great statesman who had for years been compelled to dissect carefully his arguments that he might meet them ; and this statesman, being a far more honest man than are most politicians, soon found himself questioning the correctness of his own position.

For some time many Tories had expressed grave uneasiness about the attitude of Sir Robert Peel on the Corn Laws. A horrible suspicion was growing that the prime minister had become infected with the heresy of the League. In February and early March of 1845 the Corn Laws came up, as come up they were sure to do at every session ; and during this discussion Mr. Cobden made one of the greatest speeches, if not the most masterly effort, of his life in Parliament. Sir Robert, who was seated by the brilliant young statesman Sidney Herbert, began taking notes. Soon however he crumpled up the paper, threw it on the floor, and turning to Mr. Herbert said : " You will have to answer him ; I cannot." That night, it is said, on crossing the lobby some one remarked : " Sir Robert, that speech of Cobden's will be hard to answer." Whereupon the prime minister, turning, replied in a low voice but with great earnestness : "*It is unanswerable.*"

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Still the motion to repeal the Corn Laws was overwhelmingly defeated, and it appeared to most that long years of weary waiting and toil would be required to break down the well-nigh insurmountable opposition.

Cobden however, with his clear vision, saw further and better than most of his *confrères*. He knew that England had been educated on this question. He knew that the failure of a crop would compel the nominally temporary opening of the ports for grain; but that, if once opened, they would never be closed again. In the summer of 1845, in a public address, he declared that the ministers were even then contemplating the repeal of the Corn Laws; and with great earnestness he continued: "I know what they are thinking as well as if I were in their hearts. It is this: they are all afraid that this Corn Law cannot be maintained—no, not a rag of it, during a period of scarcity prices, of a famine season, such as we had in '39, '40, and '41. They know it. They are prepared when such a time comes to abolish the Corn Laws. They have made up their minds to it. They are going to repeal them, as I told you—mark my words—at a season of distress. That distress may come; aye, three weeks of showery weather, when the

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wheat is in bloom or ripening, would repeal those Corn Laws." *

Even as he was speaking nature was at work, and events were hurrying on that should prove in a startling manner the truth of his prophecy.

*Morley's "Life of Cobden," p. 46.

CHAPTER VIII.

FAMINE AIDS THE LEAGUE

Only Want arouses a People—The Irish Potato-rot of 1845—
Sir Robert Peel in 1845—Lord John Russell—The *Times*—
Vain Attempt to change Ministry.

AS HAS been observed, the masses of a nation are extremely conservative. They suffer long before they complain; they complain for years, perhaps for decades, before they rebel. It is not enough to convince them of the injustice that works oppression. They must feel the pangs of hunger, and suffer in other ways, before they seriously entertain ideas of resistance. And it is a noteworthy fact that not infrequently—after generations of oppression, after the suffering and poverty of millions have risen to such a point as to seem intolerable, and after they have been plainly, repeatedly, and even continuously shown the cause of their wretchedness—they still shrink from demanding, as with one voice, their just rights, till Nature with stern mien lays a heavy hand upon

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them. It was only after years of want, famine and distress in the land that the French Revolution became inevitable; and so in England, after the people had been thoroughly informed by an educational campaign carried on without intermission for eight years, they continued to bear their burdens, and, so long as the crops remained good, flocked to the standard of their oppressors in such numbers as entrenched them strongly in power. Though by a wise and far-seeing statesman a revolutionary sentiment might have been discerned smouldering deep down in the hearts of millions, there was apparent no organized attempt on the part of the breadwinners to insist upon those radical measures that their condition imperatively demanded.

Such was the condition of affairs when in the early autumn of 1845 an ugly rumor gained currency—a rumor that filled the landed class with grave forebodings, and which roused the Anti-Corn-Law League from its lethargy. According to this report, the rainy season had produced rot in the potato that was the staple food of Ireland. Without the potato, and with ports closed to corn, tens of thousands of English subjects would starve to death. The Tory press was prompt to deny the absurd report, which the editors were sure was an alarmist cry manufactured by the League; but as

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the days passed the indisputable confirmation of the terrible news made doubt impossible to all who were willing to admit the truth. Instantly the League was alive. Cobden, Bright, and other clear-sighted leaders saw full well that agitation now meant everything; and, as though by magic, the press began to pour forth its pamphlets and leaflets, while the Liberal journals opened fire all along the line. Great meetings were held throughout England.

Sir Robert Peel appreciated the fact that a crisis was at hand. He was in many respects far in advance of the great statesmen of his day, and he was—what many of them were not—honest, sincere, and brave. He did not wish to be a Free Trader; he desired to uphold the Corn Laws: but he loved the truth and the welfare of his nation more than he loved his party—far more than he loved himself. Mr. Cobden and the League had by slow degrees forced the honest but slow-thinking statesman to believe in the wisdom and justice of their position, and this was his mental attitude when the grave news of the famine fell upon Tory ears as falls the roar of the breakers on the hearing of the crew of a storm-beaten bark.

Peel now saw clearly that, in order to avert or at least to minimize the danger of a forcible revolution, it was necessary to take prompt measures for

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the relief of the people. In the autumn of 1845 he summoned the ministry to discuss the feasibility of temporarily opening the ports. Someone objected, stating that if they were opened it might be difficult to effect a closure again; and the prime minister replied that he had grave doubts as to whether they ever could be closed again, when once they had been opened. At this the majority of the ministry refused to accede to his proposal.

At about this time Lord John Russell, then the leader of the Liberals, came out squarely for the immediate and unconditional repeal of the Corn Laws. On the twenty-second of November he sent out from Edinburgh his famous letter to his constituents in London, in which he insisted that the present condition of the country could not be viewed without apprehension: "delay would produce a degree of suffering frightful to contemplate"; bold action might avert serious evils, and he urged the importance of union, in order to put an end to the system "which had been proved to be the blight of commerce, the bane of agriculture, the source of bitter division among classes, the cause of penury, fever, and crime among the people." This was the first time that Lord John Russell had committed himself to free trade and the repeal of the Corn Laws, and it necessarily

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produced a tremendous impression throughout Great Britain.

Scarcely had the excitement caused by this letter begun to wane, when another sensation arose: "On the fourth of December, 1845," to use the language of Dr. Mackay, "great political excitement was created in London and all the great cities by an apparently authoritative announcement in the *Times*, that Sir Robert Peel had not only become a convert to the principles of free trade generally, but had resolved to propose, at the opening of Parliament in January, the total, immediate, and unconditional abolition of the Corn Laws; and that Sir Robert in the Commons, and the Duke of Wellington in the Lords, would publicly state the fact, and stake the existence of their administration on the passing of the measure.

"Opinion was staggered by the announcement. Some people thought they were imposed upon by an elaborate hoax, and the Glasgow Tories denounced it in plain, uncourteous speech as a lie. Even the Liberals, willing to believe, were yet afraid to give it credence. On the following day the *Times* repeated its assertion in two separate articles, so emphatically and seriously that even the dismayed protectionists could doubt no longer."*

* Mackay's "Forty Years' Recollections," vol. I., p. 269.

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The Tories however were not disposed to yield. So strong was the pressure brought to bear upon the ministry that Peel, not being willing to abandon his position, resigned. Lord John Russell was summoned by the Queen to form a ministry—a very difficult feat, in view of the fact that the Tories were in the majority. The attempt resulted in failure, and Sir Robert was again called to the helm. He formed a ministry in harmony with his views, and the opening of 1846 found the people of England stirred by political excitement as they had not been moved since the passage of the Reform Bill in 1832.

CHAPTER IX.

THE REPEAL

Sir Robert Peel announces his Conversion, 1846—Benjamin Disraeli—Peel declares his Programme—Acrimonious Debates—Peel's Courageous Stand—Bill passes Commons and Lords—Estimate of Victory.

ON THE twenty-second of January, 1846, Parliament assembled. The Queen in person opened the session. The address from the throne foreshadowed the course about to be outlined by the ministry. But before presenting his programme Peel made a notable speech, in which he explained that he had been compelled, against his prejudices and his will, to change his views on the subject of Free Trade. He was so explicit as to leave no possible doubt that he had become a thorough convert to the views of the League. He insisted that, in his opinion, the time had come when "that protection which he had taken office to maintain, must be abandoned forever."

This bold announcement created consternation

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among the Tories, and especially among the beneficiaries of the Corn Laws; for, though the public had been prepared for a somewhat radical stand, few had imagined that at the very opening of the session the leader of the Conservatives, who for so many years had in a masterly manner fought every attempt to repeal the Corn Laws, would come forward and announce his unqualified acceptance of the principles of the Manchester school.

It is not strange, therefore, that the prime minister instantly became the target of a general and furious attack. He was assailed with that intense bitterness which is ever manifested when a leader renounces a cause that he has hitherto triumphantly upheld. No personalities or abusive epithets were too bitter for his late friends to indulge in. The Conservative press vied with the Tory leaders in terms of reproach. He was characterized as "Judas Iscariot," "Jerry Sneak," and "Jim Crow."

It was at this time that Benjamin Disraeli—who had entered the House as an extreme Radical among the Liberals, and for nine sessions had done nothing noteworthy, though he had made many failures when attempting to speak and had at times rendered himself ridiculous—rose at a single bound to a commanding position by an amazingly brilliant

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arraignment of Peel. In this address that so astonished the house, Disraeli was frequently extravagant in his language, but that at such a time was held to be a virtue by the incensed Tories. He was bitter in his scornful sarcasm, and the telling phrases that leaped in quick succession from his lips were received with rounds of applause. From the hour of that memorable philippic Benjamin Disraeli entered upon a career which in success and brilliancy has been equaled only by that of his great and life-long political antagonist William Ewart Gladstone, who was at that very moment a member of Peel's ministry.

On the twenty-seventh of January the prime minister announced his programme, accompanying the announcement with an address of great power and well calculated to convince any thoughtful person who was not blinded by prejudice or by interest. The measures proposed provided for the complete abolition of the Corn-Law Tax after three years, while in the interim a fixed duty, not nearly so vexatious nor so injurious as the sliding scale then in operation, was to prevail. In the course of his argument Sir Robert took occasion to point out again the benefits and the importance to England of the acceptance of the principles of Free Trade.

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The division of the House on the first reading of the bill showed that the prime minister had a majority of ninety-seven; but, as Mr. Morley observes: "It was a hollow and not an honest majority. The remarkable peculiarity of the Parliamentary contest was that not a hundred members of the House of Commons were in favour of total repeal, and fewer still were in favour of immediate repeal. . . . In the Upper House it was notorious that not one peer in ten was in his heart inclined to pass the Corn Bill." *

The stubbornly fought battle was marked by long and heated debates, in which on the side of the Tories passion and prejudice were more in evidence than was either sober reason or sound argument. The beneficiaries of special privileges are always ready to fight to the death, even when by so doing they endanger the nation's welfare, rather than yield that for which they make no adequate return, and which is frequently in its very nature oppressive and unjust. This fact was never more clearly illustrated than during the titanic battle that marked the Parliamentary struggle of the session of 1846.

Seldom has a great statesman been placed in a more trying position than was Peel during the long

* Morley's "Life of Cobden," pp. 51-52.

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and acrimonious debates in which with tireless reiteration speakers of his own party hurled at him the unjust and odious charge of having sold out his party. None knew better than he how much it had cost him to sacrifice his future, and to desert a party that was dear to him by a thousand ties, that he might save his nation. Yet, on the other hand, none knew better than he that no measure less radical than the repeal of the Corn Laws could successfully meet the rising storm and avert the serious crisis that confronted the nation. He had for some time watched with growing apprehension the rapid growth of a revolutionary spirit among the people on the continent of Europe. He had become convinced that a great uprising was brewing, and he knew the undercurrent of sentiment among the masses of England too well to imagine that a paltering or a vacillating course could avert a forcible revolution, if, as he foresaw that it in all probability would do, the Continent again set the example. And yet, with this growing conviction, it had only been after a long and bitter struggle with ambition, with prejudice and with personal desire, that he had been compelled by his love of country and by his conviction of duty to take the stand that in an hour made him, even though at the time prime minister of the realm, virtually a statesman

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without a party. Seldom in the history of the statesmanship of modern times has the world witnessed a more inspiring or nobler spectacle than that presented by Sir Robert Peel in this crisis of English history.

On the fifteenth of March the bill passed the Commons by a majority of ninety-eight. It was promptly sent to the House of Lords, where it received the indispensable championship of the Duke of Wellington. Personally the venerable old Tory did not wish repeal; but he had the greatest confidence in Peel, and was not willing to jeopardize the peace of the nation by refusing to throw his great influence where the throne and the prime minister believed the cause of wisdom and justice to lie. The bill passed the House of Lords on the twenty-fifth of June.

The announcement of the triumph set England aflame with enthusiasm. One of the influential papers of the day, in an excellent summary of the achievement, said :

“A great revolution has been peacefully achieved; a revolution unstained by bloodshed—having for its object no dethronement of a dynasty, no substitution of one tyranny in the place of another—having no punishment, no harshness, no evil of any kind in its composition—was wrought by discussion alone, and by the inherent and irresistible powers of Truth and Justice.”

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It was one of the ironies of fate that the very day that saw the passage of the great reform measure in the House of Lords witnessed also the fall of Sir Robert Peel's ministry, on a vote touching a coercive bill introduced into the house to meet a lawless condition in Ireland, due chiefly to the terrible suffering of the poor. Though the Tories heartily favored the prime minister's measure, they had determined to wreak revenge upon him for what they regarded as his betrayal, by driving him into private life.

The splendid work achieved by Peel in carrying the Anti-Corn-Law measure to a successful issue in the face of such opposition as had confronted him in Parliament, was glory enough for one life.

The passage of this measure was incomparably the most important political step taken since the enactment of the Reform Bill in 1832; it announced the entrance of England upon a long and marvelously prosperous career. It moreover marked the triumph of the people over a stubborn aristocracy; the victory of justice over greed; of the masses over the favored few.

The Anti-Corn-Law movement was quickened by the new spirit of popular rule; with its success Great Britain set her face steadfastly toward the democratic ideal.

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Finally, the great popular victory averted the revolution of force that was without doubt threatening, and which, had it not been for the repeal, would probably have broken out in terrible fury in 1848, when the Continent became the theater of such general uprisings of the people as had never before been known.

CHAPTER X.

LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT

Importance of Repeal and of Reform Bill—Obstacles Apparently Insurmountable—No Such Word as Fail—League Methods—Singleness of Aim—Tables Turned—Youth the Mainstay of Anti-Corn-Law Movement—Appeal to Reason and Conscience—Lessons of Chartism—Conclusion.

THE STORY of the social agitation that marked the early years of Queen Victoria's reign is replete with lessons, with suggestions, and with warnings to the friends of free government. The success achieved by the Anti-Corn-Law League is one of the most inspiring spectacles in modern history. It would be difficult to overestimate the value to the cause of peaceful progress of the repeal of the ancient class-laws that fostered monopoly in the breadstuffs of the English nation.

This victory, and the passage of the Reform Bill in 1832, furnish two striking illustrations of how the democratic idea may be realized in the actual working of government in spite of opposition that

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seems to be insurmountable. They prove that ancient wrongs, no matter how firmly entrenched, no matter how rich and powerful their upholders, may be overthrown by pacific methods when the reason of a people has been convinced of the righteousness of a cause, and their sense of right appealed to.

In the victory of the Reform Bill we have an illustration of the achievement of a revolutionary step in government in spite of an opposition so formidable that it seemed almost absurd to imagine that the innovation could be introduced without the shock of arms.

During the Anti-Corn-Law crusade it was often urged that, no matter how well the people might be educated on the question, the Parliament would never consent to the reform, as its members were too deeply interested in the maintenance of the special privilege; that the landed interests would be able easily to defeat any number of representatives sufficient to make the bill's passage at all probable in the Commons; while, should the measure by any chance pass the lower house, the Lords would never consent to ratify a proposition that would deplete their revenues in so substantial a way. The force of this argument will be appreciated when we call to mind these words of Mr. McCarthy: "The

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free-trade leaders must have found their hearts sink within them when they came sometimes to confront that fortress of traditions and vested rights. Even after the change made in favour of manufacturing and middle-class interests by the Reform Bill, the House of Commons was still composed, as to nine-tenths of its whole number, by representatives of the landlords. The entire House of Lords was then constituted of the owners of land. All tradition, all prestige, all the dignity of aristocratic institutions, seemed to be naturally arrayed against the new movement." *

And yet—with the great press closed to the League, with the landed interests and the nobility a unit against the reform, with the church either openly in sympathy with the Tories or discreetly silent, with the Chartists fighting the repealers as vigorously as the Conservatives were doing, and with Parliament overwhelmingly in favor of retaining the odious measure—the League so aroused the moral sentiment of England that the unwilling government was forced to bow before the might of an awakened national conscience.

The fact that in a period of eight years this little band of moral heroes was able to work so mighty a

* Justin McCarthy, "History of Our Own Times," Am. ed., vol. I., p. 222.

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change from the old order to the new—a revolution, in fact—should prove to all reformers that there need be no such word as *fail*, if a just and true cause can call to its aid a few men willing to dedicate their very existence to its triumph, and who will exercise wisdom in their work, as well as the enthusiasm born of a passionate love of justice.

The Anti-Corn-Law League did not seek victory in a day ; but it did set out to convince the reason and to arouse the conscience of every man and woman of intelligence and conviction who was open to the truth. By working persistently on this line the reformers assured final victory.

The methods employed by the League for reaching and arousing the conscience of England are so helpfully suggestive to us to-day that we may here well make a résumé of them :

With the government, with the preponderance of the wealth of the nation, and with the opinion-forming agencies actively hostile, the League organized its campaign and carried it to success by systematic educational methods. These embraced a lecture bureau employing a number of trained, able, wise and temperate speakers, who succeeded in forming clubs or associations, *i. e.*, centers of interest, through which the main organization was enabled to reach an increasing number of voters at

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each successive election. The printing-press also ably supplemented the lecturers; when the great journals refused to give a hearing, the League set at work printing tracts, questions and answers, brief and pointed arguments, songs, popular poems, fables, and stories, till the great body of Englishmen had been reached and intelligently appealed to. This propaganda by tracts and leaflets was further reinforced by a weekly organ that chronicled the news of the movement, while teeming with masterly arguments in favor of the cause. By having one recognized official organ, instead of a score of weak and ill-printed journals each leading a precarious existence, the cause was greatly strengthened. Those interested in the League were sufficient in number to support one paper and make it a great power in England, far more effective than was the host of warring Chartist organs that sprang up like mushrooms on every side and most of which lived but a short time, then disappeared.

In the great cities mass meetings were frequently held, at which the strongest men in the movement were present. These meetings were carried on with the same moral fervor that marks the great religious revivals of our time. Moreover, those who attended them were supplied with packages of printed matter that was pretty sure to interest the reader, and to

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convince him that there was much at least to be said in favor of the cause. Often the lecturers went out by twos, as did Cobden and Bright on many occasions. Thus one supplemented the other; and, in places where great interest was shown, one of the speakers could remain for other lectures and so better organize the movement in the place, while his co-laborer filled the next engagement.

It required much money to carry on such a campaign, even though the apostles of repeal gladly made noble sacrifices. Although the manufacturers of Manchester and of other cities contributed liberally to the needs of the organization, the amounts collected were not large enough to meet expenses. Hence it was found practical to hold bazaars in various cities. To these the friends of economic freedom contributed freely. Women and girls, no less than men, engaged actively in the manufacture of articles and the furnishing of supplies, as they aided also by their services in helping make the bazaars great financial successes. Tens of thousands of pounds were raised in this way, which aided in no small degree in vigorously pushing forward the educational agitation. Later, when the press began to open its columns to League news, bright and competent men were not wanting to supply the more liberal journals with well written

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news-items, and arguments supporting the reform.

The sympathy of the League was naturally with the Whigs or Liberals rather than with the Tories, as the latter were rightly regarded as Bourbons—"learning nothing, forgetting nothing"—on the question of the Corn Laws, while not a few of the Whig statesmen favored repeal, or at least leaned in that direction. However, whenever the League found a candidate who would unreservedly pledge himself to repeal, that man, no matter what his views might be on other public questions, received the League's support.

The leaders concentrated their attention on repeal and rejected resolutely all attempts to make the movement a vehicle for any other reform theory or proposition. They thus avoided one of the most common mistakes of reformers, who usually insist upon carrying into a political battle a multitude of issues, in the erroneous belief that many excellent measures will attract a larger support than will the one great reform issue upon which the people are best informed.

No fact in the history of practical political measures that deal with advance movements has been more clearly demonstrated than that "omnibus" reform platforms, though they may be almost ideal in character, are sure to meet with overwhelming

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defeat at the polls. The reason for this is readily seen when we remember that they form so many points of attack. A large section of the nation may be convinced of the importance of one of the issues, while quite ignorant as to the character, or unconvinced as to the necessity, of the others. Furthermore, a very small percentage of the electors will be convinced of the importance of *all* of the proposed innovations. This gives the opposition decidedly an advantage in the battle, while the radical and sweeping character of the platform affords conservatism and the interested classes an opportunity of frightening the ever-timid middle class by raising alarmist cries.

The victory of the League was made possible largely by the wisdom of the leaders in steadfastly refusing to uphold the mob spirit or revolutionary sentiment abroad at the time.

When lawlessness occurred (as it frequently did in disturbances caused by the friends of monopoly) the lecturers of the League, instead of offering resistance or of encouraging the lawless spirit on their own side, retired if necessary temporarily from the scene. The League seized upon all such exhibitions of disorder on the part of the upholders of the old régime as legitimate capital ; by stating the facts and giving them the widest circulation, they made every

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such attempt to break up a meeting a positive aid to the cause of progress.

In like manner the persecutions and unjust treatment of the League's speakers by the authorities in various towns were made helpful, as showing to the electors that those in power sought to deprive Englishmen of the enjoyment of one of their dearest and most precious rights—free speech.

The successful issue of the battle was to a great extent due to young men, who carried into the work the sublime faith that a forlorn hope may be carried to victory even when the judgment of the age pronounces its triumph impossible.

It is to the young men that a nation must look for her greatest achievements in progressive reform movements. True, there is always a band of prophet souls—a chosen few who live ever so near to the heart of Divinity that they keep the faith, the hope, the enthusiasm and the confidence of youth till they near the end. The large majority of men and women, however, fall sooner or later under the fatal spell of slothful conventionality or of cynical pessimism. Their dreams of youth have not been realized—or, at best, but partly so. Hence they have lost heart; and, from joining in the cry of "Hosanna!" at the advent of the new truth, they have become a part of the chorus shouting "Cru-

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cify!" in the hour of sorest need. But not so with the young. Strong in hope, fired with indomitable courage, vitalized by a living faith and overmastered by enthusiasm, they become the chosen children of Liberty and of Progress. When they fail a nation her time of decadence is come.

The Anti-Corn-Law League addressed the reason and the conscience of England. Never was an economic measure presented more strongly to the ethical side of man's nature. With Richard Cobden and with John Bright the reform came to be a religion, and their moral enthusiasm was infectious. The lecturers, the poets, and the writers of tracts made their appeals directly to conscience—to the divine in the individual. They pleaded with those in easy circumstances to think of the starving; and, inasmuch as they set their cause on a high plane and avoided all threats, they reached and warmed into active life the heart of men and of women who had all their lives been the servants of prejudice and the slaves of self-interest. They thus secured the support of a large element that otherwise could not have been influenced, but whose accession was essential to the success of the cause.

Chartism also offers its lessons and its warnings. It went before the people with a just and reasonable

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cause, though one that in the nature of the case called for much preliminary educating. Its demands, instead of relating merely to the enactment of laws affecting social and economic conditions, struck at the fountain-head of government; for, like the Reform Bill, it proposed to introduce another and a large element into the law-making department of the nation.

The Anglo-Saxon people are slow to adopt innovations, especially any that seem to menace the stability of the government or the security of the home, or which even threaten business with serious depression. No great radical reform can be achieved till the intelligence and the moral sense of the majority of the people approve of the change.

The more radical a programme, the more important it is that it be presented in a conservative manner; that is, that the appeal be made solely to the reason and to the conscience of the nation, and that all threats of force or intimations of resorting to coercion be religiously avoided. Here it was that Chartism made its fatal mistake and gave the government the excuse that conventionalism so fervently desired for forcibly interfering with educational propaganda and summarily closing the mouths of those who were, in spite of their often intemperate and injudicious utterances, doing much to

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arouse the sympathies of the people in a cause the wisdom and the righteousness of which have long since been admitted in the adoption of its vital demands by the government.

To succeed in combatting ancient and powerful wrongs, or in adjusting the government to changed conditions, so that the best interests of society may be guarded and the rights of all be protected, it is necessary to acquaint the people with the nature and the probable results of the innovation proposed, and to win their support by direct appeal to the enlightened judgment and the sense of right. Several leading Chartists came to a realization of this all-important fact, but not till after the mob spirit had broken out in various places and by its manifestation, as well as by the intemperance of many accredited leaders, thousands had been alienated from the movement whose aid was indispensable to its success. And then it was too late.

In writing of the unhappy division caused by rival factions, one advocating physical force and the other moral suasion, Mr. R. G. Gammage, in his excellent "History of the Chartist Movement," makes the following observations that are as applicable to reform movements to-day as they were to Chartism in the 'forties of the last century :

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“Anything more unfortunate than this division could scarcely have occurred. It was indirectly playing the game into the hands of the common enemy, by each of the two sections weakening and destroying the power of the other. We believe these discussions of moral and physical force were, generally speaking, a mere waste of time. We look upon the two kinds of force to be inseparably linked. In political matters, unquestionably so. Governments are necessarily institutions of force, moral to a certain extent, but beyond that extent, physical. A government without physical force would be simply no government at all. We will suppose a government of the very best kind to be established, executing laws which had been enacted by common consent. So far it would be strictly moral in the exercise of its power; but a law is of little avail unless there exists a physical power for its enforcement, for without such physical power a small minority may turn refractory, and refuse to obey that law in the enactment of which all have had an equal voice; in which case the just interests of the general community must succumb to the selfish and exclusive interests of the few. The law, then, should always be supported by a power physical in its nature, but founded on the moral opinion of the people, for without this it is a dead letter. If, on the other hand, a government rules in defiance of the will of the majority, it necessarily rules by force alone. Let that majority manifest a resolve to bring about a change in the system of government; the usurping class, who in their greedy love of exclusive power, evince their contempt of moral force, can never be moved but by the knowledge that such moral force is backed by another kind of force stronger than itself. We might challenge the history of the world to show that any government on earth, of an exclusive character, was ever moved to the abdication of its usurped functions except by physical force or the fear of it. Where that force is not used, the usurping class invariably feel the danger of its approach before they concede one iota to the claims of popular justice. At the same time it is undeniable, that to talk about using physical force against a government to a people who have not shown themselves to be prepared

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for its use by even the smallest sacrifice, is not only to do no good to a popular movement, but to sink it in immeasurable contempt. For a people, unprepared to make smaller sacrifices, will never be prepared to make the larger one of life. Hence all threats of physical force should be avoided in every case, until the people are imbued with a sound knowledge of their political and social rights. When so prepared, should their oppressors refuse to concede their claims, they will want but little admonishing, for the law of self-preservation will tell them what to do, and they will implicitly obey its voice."*

What seemed to be failure of Chartism was in effect rather a *postponement* than a defeat of its principal demands. The victory of the Reform Bill and that of the Anti-Corn-Law League, with the widespread educational agitation that preceded their triumph, served to interest almost every Englishman in political problems, and may be said to have virtually turned the realm into a vast social and economic school. So thorough-going and fundamental were the discussions that the face of the nation was firmly set toward freedom. Great republican principles took the place of ancient excuses for limited and arbitrary government, and, though this change was wrought primarily by education, the people came to see that the vital demands of Chartism had been just, wise, and expedient; so much so that the measures that had aroused the

* R. G. Gammage, "History of the Chartist Movement," pp. 85-86.

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chief opposition because they were the most radical and important, namely, manhood suffrage, vote by ballot, and the abolition of the property qualification for members of Parliament, have long since been granted. In later years Gerald Massey, in a preface to his reform poems of the period, expressed his realization of the fact that the cause for which he and his friends had wrought, though for a time it had appeared lost, was step by step triumphing over every obstacle—and triumphing without bloodshed, without the destruction of life or of property, and without pitting hate against hate, or arousing class against class.

“Our visions have not come to naught,
Who saw by Lightning in the night,
The deeds we Dreamed are being Wrought
By those who Work in clearer light;
In other ways our fight is fought,
And other forms fulfill our Thought
Made visible to all men's sight.”

In the case of the Anti-Corn-Law victory, however, it is well to remember that the happy issue was due not wholly to the League. As we have said, final victory was sure. Yet, had there been a George III. on the throne, or had the prime minister of the realm and the leader of the Opposition been a Bourbon, we can easily see how England

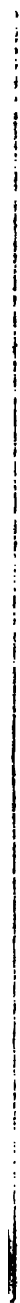
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might have witnessed all the horrors of a bloody revolution, with its waste of life and its destruction of property; from which she would finally have arisen with hate and bitterness rife on every hand, and with new dangers and complications to be grappled with, while lacking that cool wisdom and sound judgment which are essential to the right settlement of any momentous issue.

Any just cause may be carried to victory if its apostles are consecrated, and if to wisdom they add that high moral enthusiasm which has ever proved irresistible in moving mankind. But the peaceful settlement of a great cause will depend largely upon the wisdom of the people in selecting as legislators and leaders only men of such lofty character that neither gold, ambition, nor flattery can lure them from the way of justice, nor abuse, slander, or unjust criticism frighten them from the path of duty.

The lesson of the 'forties of the nineteenth century in Great Britain must prove at once instructive and inspiring to all who earnestly desire to see our great republic fronting the Eternal Day, guided by wisdom, by justice and by love, and scorning sordid and selfish motives that seek to turn her from her Heaven-sent mission as the leader of civilization's vanguard.

APPENDIX



APPENDIX

I. *TYPICAL POEMS AND SONGS OF THE PERIOD OF THE CORN-LAW AND CHARTIST AGITATIONS*

AS A RULE historians pay but slight heed to the influence of literature upon public opinion in a period of social agitation, while the poems of protest that appear are usually wholly ignored. Yet often the tract, the pamphlet, the popular song are powerful agents in a revolutionary movement; it is quite sure that the poems of protest published during the Corn-Law and Chartist agitations were very effective. Indeed, to understand the temper of the time, it is absolutely necessary to catch something of the popular spirit from the work of the people's poets. For this reason, I give a number of typical productions of this revolutionary era. Some of these verses have but little value beyond illustrating the feeling of the people and their point of view when the rhymes were written; others are applicable to present conditions no less than to the time that called them forth; while not a few will continue to be—

“ . . . breakers of the peace,
Till the Wrongs are righted;
The man-made miseries cease;
Till earth's Disinherited
Beg no more to earn their bread.”

In point of time Ebenezer Elliott's rhymes come first in the reform verse of the period. It is an interesting fact that Southey—then

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poet-laureate of England—took great interest in the work of the Corn-Law Rhymer, as did also Bulwer Lytton and Thomas Carlyle. The following lines on monopoly are from the exordium to Elliott's greatest poem, "The Village Patriarch":

"EXORDIUM

"MONOPOLY! if every funeral bough
Of thine be hung with crimes too foul to name;
Accursed of millions! if already thou,
Watch'd by mute vengeance and indignant shame,
Art putting forth thy buds of blood and flame,
What will thy fruitage be? No matter—wave
Thy branches o'er our hearts! and, like a pall,
Let thy broad shadow darken Freedom's grave!
Not yet the Upas of the Isles shall fall,
If aught shall stand. Spread, then, and cover all!
Fear'st thou the axe? Long since the feller died;
And thou art deaf to thunder. But, Black Tree!
Thine own fruits will consume thee in thy pride!
O may thy inbred flame blast naught but thee,
When burns the beacon which the blind shall see!
Meantime, I make my theme the toil and grief
That water thee with tears—the fear and hate
Whose mutter'd curses fan thy deadly leaf—
Sad, silent changes—burning wrongs, that wait
To hear Delusion scream at Rapine's gate,
'Our master's cause is lost, and Hell's undone!'"

Elliott abhorred war and all display of physical force, or of the mob spirit; yet at times he seemed to be mastered by the revolutionary temper of the period. In some of his most stirring lines he reflected the conviction of many of the clearest-sighted even though most optimistic philosophers of England, that a struggle was inevitable before the Corn Laws could be repealed. In the "Battle Song" the Corn-Law Rhymer shows a high degree of poetic imagination and displays intense feeling. As a hymn of war it is a fine creation; but it is difficult to imagine a poet who shrank from the thought of

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bloodshed, and of the misery incident to war, penning the following lines, which are nothing if not militant:

"BATTLE SONG

"DAY, like our souls, is fiercely dark;
What then? 'Tis day!
We sleep no more; the cock crows—hark!
To arms! away!
They come! they come! the knell is rung
Of us, or them;
Wide o'er their march the pomp is flung
Of gold and gem.
What collar'd hound of lawless sway,
To famine dear—
What pension'd slave of Attila,
Leads in the rear?
Come they from Scythian wilds afar,
Our blood to spill?
Wear they the livery of the Czar?
They do his will.
Nor tassel'd silk, nor epaulette,
Nor plume, nor torse—
No splendour gilds, all sternly met,
Our foot and horse.
But, dark and still, we inly glow,
Condensed in ire!
Strike, tawdry slaves, and ye shall know
Our gloom is fire.
In vain your pomp, ye evil powers,
Insults the land;
Wrongs, vengeance, and *the cause* are ours,
And God's right hand!
Madmen! they trample into snakes
The wormy clod!
Like fire, beneath their feet awakes
The sword of God!
Behind, before, above, below,
They rouse the brave;
Where'er they go, they make a foe,
Or find a grave."

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While boldly arraigning the Corn Laws as a crying wrong against the poor, Elliott was not blind to their faults as shown in intemperance, and in that shiftlessness which is so likely to appear in the lives of those who are oftener oppressed by fear for the morrow than buoyed up by hope of a brighter future. He perceived as did but few men of his time the power of beauty over the imagination of man, its subtle influence in softening, ennobling and enriching life. He knew how the humblest abode was glorified and refined by its presence; in this respect, the Sheffield iron-worker anticipated the efforts of John Ruskin. Elliott wrote several homely poems such as would appeal to the simple mind of the poor about him. The following production is an example of this kind:

“THE HOME OF TASTE

“You seek the home of taste, and find
The proud mechanic there,
Rich as a king and less a slave,
Throned in his elbow-chair!
Or on his sofa reading Locke,
Beside his open door!
Why start?—why envy worth like his
The carpet on his floor?

“You seek the home of sluttery—
‘Is John at home?’ you say.
‘No, sir; he’s at the “Sportsman’s Arms”;
The dog-fight’s o’er the way.’
O lift the workman’s heart and mind
Above low sensual sin!
Give him a home! the home of taste!
Outbid the house of gin!

“O give him taste! it is the link
Which binds us to the skies—
A bridge of rainbows, thrown across
The gulf of tears and sighs;

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Or like a widower's little one—
An angel in a child—
That leads him to her mother's chair,
And shews him how she smil'd."

The Corn-Law Rhymer wrote some of the strongest lines of the time when all England was convulsed by the Reform-Bill agitation. At that period the printing-press was coming to be a greater factor in shaping public opinion than it had ever been before. It was the dawn of the day of tracts and pamphlets. The multiplication of printing-presses gave the poet hope of a brighter future; inspired by this hope he penned the following stanzas, which give us a hint of his love of nature, second with Elliott only to his passion for justice :

" THE PRESS

"God said—'Let there be light!'
Grim darkness felt his might,
And fled away;
Then startled seas and mountains cold
Shone forth, all bright in blue and gold,
And cried—'Tis day! 'tis day!'
'Hail, holy light!' exclaim'd
The thund'rous cloud, that flamed
O'er daisies white;
And, lo! the rose, in crimson dress'd,
Lean'd sweetly on the lily's breast;
And, blushing, murmured—'Light!'
Then was the skylark born;
Then rose th' embattl'd corn;
Then floods of praise
Flow'd o'er the sunny hills of noon;
And then, in stillest night, the moon
Pour'd forth her pensive lays.
Lo, heaven's bright bow is glad!
Lo, trees and flowers all clad
In glory, bloom!
And shall the mortal sons of God
Be senseless as the trodden clod,

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And darker than the tomb?
No, by the *mind* of man!
By the swart artisan!
By God, our Sire!
Our souls have holy light within,
And every form of grief and sin
Shall see and feel its fire.
By earth, and hell, and heav'n,
The shroud of souls is riven!
Mind, mind alone
Is light, and hope, and life, and power!
Earth's deepest night, from this bless'd hour,
The night of minds, is gone!
'The Press!' all lands shall sing;
The Press, the Press we bring,
All lands to bless:
O pallid Want! O Labour stark!
Behold, we bring the second ark!
The Press! the Press! the Press!"

We come now to two fine poems that were referred to in the body of this book, and which set before us the pitiful lot of women and children in our boasted modern civilization. Elizabeth Barrett's "Cry of the Children" and Thomas Hood's "Song of the Shirt" will live in literature long after this present age of greed shall have given place to a worthier time. Here follow the poems:

"THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN

"Φεῖ, φεῖ, τί προσδέκεσθαι μ' ὀφθαλμοῖσιν, τέκνα.'—MEDEA.

"Do YE hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,
And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest,
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—

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But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly!
They are weeping, in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

“Do you question the young children in the sorrow,
Why their tears are falling so?
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago,
The old tree is leafless in the forest,
The old year is ending in the frost,
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,
The old hope is hardest to be lost:
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland?

“They look up with their pale and sunken faces,
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy.
‘Your old earth,’ they say, ‘is very dreary,
Our young feet,’ they say, ‘are very weak!
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek.
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children,
For the outside earth is cold,
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old.

“‘True,’ say the children, ‘it may happen
That we die before our time:
Little Alice died last year—her grave is shapen
Like a snowball in the rime;
We looked into the pit prepared to take her,
Was no room for any work in the close clay!
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
Crying, “Get up, little Alice! it is day.”
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries!

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Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes,
And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud by the kirk-chime !
It is good when it happens, say the children,
'That we die before our time.'

"Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking
Death in life, as best to have!
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cerement from the grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city;
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do;
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty;
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!
But they answer, 'Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine!

"'For oh,' say the children, 'we are weary,
And we cannot run or leap;
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep;
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,
We fall upon our faces, trying to go,
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring,
Through the coal-dark, underground;
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

"'For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning;
Their wind comes in our faces,
Till our hearts turn; our heads with pulses burning,
And the walls, turn in their places;
Turns the sky in the high window, blank and reeling,
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling,
All are turning, all the day, and we with all;

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And, all day, the iron wheels are droning,
And sometimes we could pray :
"O ye wheels" (breaking out in a mad moaning),
"Stop ! be silent for to-day !"

"Ay ! be silent ! Let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth,
Let them touch each other's hands, in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth !
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals,
Let them prove their inward souls against the notion
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels !
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark,
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

"Now, tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
To look up to Him and pray,
So the blessed One, who blesseth all the others,
Will bless them another day.
They answer, 'Who is God that He should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheels is stirred ?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word !
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door :
Is it likely God, with angels singing round Him,
Hears our weeping any more ?

"Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,
And, at midnight's hour of harm,
"Our Father," looking upward in the chamber,
We say softly for a charm ;
We know no other words except "Our Father,"
And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
And hold both within His right hand which is strong.
"Our Father !" If He heard us, He would surely

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(For they call Him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
"Come and rest with me, my child."

"But no!" say the children, weeping faster,
'He is speechless as a stone—
And they tell us, of His image is the master
Who commands us to work on;
Go to!' say the children, 'up in Heaven
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find;
Do not mock us, grief has made us unbelieving,
We look up for God, but tears have made us blind.'
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by His world's loving—
And the children doubt of each!

"And well may the children weep before you:
They are weary ere they run;
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory
Which is brighter than the sun;
They know the grief of man, but not the wisdom;
They sink in man's despair, without its calm;
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom;
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm;
Are worn, as if with age, yet unretrievably
The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.
Let them weep! let them weep!

"They look up, with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places,
With eyes turned on Deity.
'How long,' they say, 'how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?
Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
And your purple shows your path;
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath!'"

Appendix

“THE SONG OF THE SHIRT

“WITH fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread.
Stitch—stitch—stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt;
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch
She sang the ‘Song of the Shirt!’

“‘Work—work—work!
While the cock is crowing aloof!
And work—work—work,
Till the stars shine through the roof!
It’s O! to be a slave,
Along with the barbarous Turk,
Where woman has never a soul to save,
If this is Christian work!

“‘Work—work—work,
Till the brain begins to swim;
Work—work—work,
Till the eyes are heavy and dim!
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Till over the buttons I fall asleep,
And sew them on in a dream!

“‘O men, with sisters dear!
O men, with mothers and wives!
It is not linen you’re wearing out,
But human creatures’ lives!
Stitch—stitch—stitch!
In poverty, hunger, and dirt;
Sewing at once, with a double thread,
A shroud as well as a shirt.

Appendix

- “ ‘But why do I talk of death?
That phantom of grisly bone;
I hardly fear his terrible shape,
It seems so like my own.
It seems so like my own,
Because of the fasts I keep,
O God! that bread should be so dear,
And flesh and blood so cheap!
- “ ‘Work—work—work!
My labour never flags;
And what are its wages? A bed of straw,
A crust of bread, and rags.
That shattered roof—and this naked floor—
A table—a broken chair;
And a wall so blank, my shadow I thank
For sometimes falling there!
- “ ‘Work—work—work!
From weary chime to chime,
Work—work—work,
As prisoners work for crime!
Band, and gusset, and seam,
Seam, and gusset, and band,
Till the heart is sick, and the brain benumbed,
As well as the weary hand.
- “ ‘Work—work—work!
In the dull December light,
And work—work—work,
When the weather is warm and bright—
While underneath the eaves
The brooding swallows cling,
As if to show me their sunny backs,
And twit me with the spring.
- “ ‘Oh, but to breathe the breath
Of the cowslip and primrose sweet—
With the sky above my head,
And the grass beneath my feet;

Appendix

For only one short hour
To feel as I used to feel,
Before I knew the woes of want
And the walk that costs a meal !

“ Oh, but for one short hour !
A respite however brief !
No blessed leisure for love or hope,
But only time for grief !
A little weeping would ease my heart,
But in their briny bed
My tears must stop, for every drop
Hinders needle and thread ! ”

“ With fingers weary and worn,
With eyelids heavy and red,
A woman sat, in unwomanly rags,
Plying her needle and thread—
Stitch—stitch—stitch !
In poverty, hunger, and dirt ;
And still with a voice of dolorous pitch,—
Would that its tone could reach the rich !—
She sang this ‘ Song of the Shirt ! ’ ”

“ The Cry of the Children ” reminds us of Dr. Charles Mackay’s noble plea for the children of the poor, which did much for the helpless ones during this period of unrest and growth. In regard to this production Mackay gave the following interesting facts :

“ Soon after the appearance of this poem, H. R. H. Prince Albert deputed her Majesty’s physician, the late Sir James Clark, to call upon the Author, and request his permission to reprint it for cheap and gratuitous circulation among the people, in aid of the great cause of the education of the poor children of the multitude—which did not receive the sanction of Parliament until more than twenty years afterwards. The permission was cheerfully and thankfully granted ; and by the warm and intelligent efforts of Sir James Clark, and the assistance and sympathy of the Prince, 20,000 copies were circulated all over the country in a cheap form.

“ A copy of this poem was sent anonymously to George Combe, the eminent philanthropist, and author of ‘ The Constitution of Man.’ ”

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He at once recognized the writer, and wrote next day, saying, 'I have received "The Souls of the Children," a poem which, I think, could come from no pen but yours. It breathes your sweet versification and beautiful, tender, yet philosophical spirit, and I thank you for it sincerely. It came under a blank cover; and if you did not write it, I thank God that England has another poet like you.' "

"THE SOULS OF THE CHILDREN

" 'WHO bids for the little children,—
Body, and soul, and brain?
Who bids for the little children,—
Young, and without a stain?
Will no one bid,' said England,
'For their souls so pure and white,
And fit for all good or evil,
The world on their page may write?'

" 'We bid,' said Pest and Famine,
'We bid for life and limb;
Fever and pain and squalor
Their bright young eyes shall dim.
When the children grow too many,
We'll nurse them as our own,
And hide them in secret places,
Where none may hear their moan.'

" 'I bid,' said Beggary, howling,
'I bid for them, one and all!
I'll teach them a thousand lessons—
To lie, to skulk, to crawl!
They shall sleep in my lair, like maggots,
They shall rot in the fair sunshine;
And if they serve my purpose,
I hope they'll answer thine.'

" 'And I'll bid higher and higher,'
Said Crime, with wolfish grin,
'For I love to lead the children
Through the pleasant paths of sin.'

Appendix

They shall swarm in the streets to pilfer,
They shall plague the broad highway,
Till they grow too old for pity,
And ripe for the law to slay.

“ ‘Prison and hulk and gallows
Are many in the land,
’T were folly not to use them,
So proudly as they stand.
Give *me* the little children—
I’ll take them as they’re born,
And feed their evil passions
With misery and scorn.

“ ‘Give *me* the little children,
Ye good, ye rich, ye wise,
And let the busy world spin round,
While ye shut your idle eyes ;
And your judges shall have work,
And your lawyers wag the tongue,
And the gaolers and policemen
Shall be fathers to the young.

“ ‘I and the Law, for pastime,
Shall struggle day and night ;
And the Law shall gain, but I shall win,
And we’ll still renew the fight :
And ever and aye we’ll wrestle,
Till Law grow sick and sad,
And kill, in its desperation,
The incorrigibly bad.

“ ‘I, and the Law, and Justice,
Shall thwart each other still ;
And hearts shall break to see it ;—
And innocent blood shall spill !
So leave—oh, leave the children
To Ignorance and Woe—
And I’ll come in and teach them
The way that they should go.’

Appendix

“‘Oh, shame!’ said true Religion,
‘Oh, shame that this should be!
I’ll take the little children,
I’ll take them all to me:
I’ll raise them up with kindness
From the mire in which they’re trod;
I’ll teach them words of blessing,
I’ll lead them up to God.’

“‘You’re *not* the true Religion,’
Said a Sect, with flashing eyes;
‘Nor thou,’ said another scowling,
‘Thou’rt heresy and lies.’
‘You shall not have the children,’
Said a third, with shout and yell;
‘You’re Antichrist and bigot—
You’d train them up for hell.’

“And England, sorely puzzled
To see such battle strong,
Exclaimed, with voice of pity,
‘Oh, friends, you do me wrong!
Oh, cease your bitter wrangling;
For, till you all agree,
I fear the little children
Will plague both you and me.’

“But all refused to listen;
Quoth they—‘We bide our time’;
And the bidders seized the children—
Beggary, Filth, and Crime;
And the prisons teemed with victims,
And the gallows rocked on high;
And the thick abomination
Spread reeking to the sky.”

I give now a group of poems written by Charles Mackay to further the cause of the Anti-Corn-Law League. They are taken from his volume entitled “Voices From the Crowd.” At the time they were written, says Dr. Mackay, “The Corn Laws were unrepealed. . . .

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Many of them were intended to aid—as far as verses could aid—the efforts of the zealous and able men who were endeavouring to create a public opinion in favour of untaxed food, and of free trade and free intercourse among the nations. They were written as plainly as possible, that they might express the general sentiment of the toiling classes in phraseology broad, simple, and intelligible as the occasion.” The poems are as follow :

“ BRITISH FREEDOM

“ WE WANT no flag, no flaunting rag,
For *Liberty* to fight ;
We want no blaze of murderous guns,
To struggle for the right.
Our spears and swords are printed words,
The mind our battle-plain ;
We 've won such victories before,
And so we shall again.

“ We love no triumphs sprung of force—
They stain her brightest cause :
'T is not in blood that Liberty
Inscribes her civil laws.
She writes them on the people's heart
In language clear and plain ;
True thoughts have moved the world before,
And so they shall again.

“ We yield to none in earnest love
Of Freedom's cause sublime ;
We join the cry, '*Fraternity!*'
We keep the march of Time.
And yet we grasp nor pike nor spear,
Our victories to obtain ;
We 've won without their aid before,
And so we shall again.

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"We want no aid of barricade
To show a front to Wrong;
We have a citadel in Truth
More durable and strong.
Calm words, great thoughts, unflinching faith
Have never striven in vain;
They've won our battles many a time,
And so they shall again.

"Peace, Progress, Knowledge, Brotherhood—
The ignorant may sneer,
The bad deny; but we rely
To see their triumph near.
No widow's groans shall load our cause,
Nor blood of brethren stain;
We've won without such aid before,
And so we shall again."

"THE WANTS OF THE PEOPLE

"WHAT do we want? Our daily bread;
Leave to earn it by our skill;
Leave to labour freely for it,
Leave to buy it where we will;
For 't is hard upon the many—
Hard, unpitied by the few,
To starve and die for want of work,
Or live half-starved with work to do.

"What do we want? Our daily bread;
Fair reward for labour done;
Daily bread for our wives and children;
All our wants are merged in one.
When the fierce fiend Hunger grips us,
Evil fancies clog our brains,
Vengeance settles on our hearts,
And Frenzy gallops through our veins.

Appendix

"What do we want? Our daily bread;
Give us that; all else will come—
Self-respect and self-denial,
And the happiness of home;
Kindly feelings, education,
Liberty for act and thought;
And surety that, whate'er befall,
Our children shall be fed and taught.

"What do we want? Our daily bread;
Give us that for willing toil;
Make us sharers in the plenty
God has shower'd upon the soil;
And we'll nurse our better natures
With bold hearts and judgment strong,
To do as much as men can do
To keep the world from going wrong.

"What do we want? Our daily bread;
And trade untrammelled as the wind;
And from our ranks shall spirits start,
To aid the progress of mankind.
Sages, poets, mechanicians,
Mighty thinkers shall arise,
To take their share of loftier work,
And teach, exalt, and civilize.

"What do we want? Our daily bread;—
Grant it;—make our efforts free;
Let us work and prosper;
You shall prosper more than we;
And the humblest homes of England
Shall in proper time give birth
To better men than we have been,
To live upon a better earth."

On one occasion Mr. Mackay took Cowley's question,

"What shall I do to be forever known,
And make the age to come mine own?"

Appendix

and answered it in these lines, which are as true to-day as they were when written :

“WHAT thou shalt do to be forever known?
Poet or statesman—look with steadfast gaze,
And see yon giant Shadow 'mid the haze,
Far off, but coming. Listen to the moan
That sinks and swells in fitful under-tone,
And lend it words, and give the shadow form ;—
And see the Light, now pale and dimly shown,
That yet shall beam resplendent after storm.
Preach thou their coming, if thy soul aspire
To be the foremost in the ranks of fame ;—
Prepare the way, with hand that will not tire,
And tongue unfaltering, and o'er earth proclaim
The Shadow, the *roused multitude* ;—the Cry,
'Justice for all!'—the Light, *true liberty*.”

Here are three poems, entitled “The Three Preachers,” “The Voice of the Time” and “Now,” that were very popular during the stirring years of the 'forties of the last century. They contain in simple lines much thought that should to-day be pressed home on the consciousness of all earnest and conscientious men and women. It may be said that the sentiments expressed are mere truisms, but, if so, they are now receiving only an intellectual assent. They are not laying upon the conscience and upon the will of our age that vital touch which causes men to express in word, in life, and in act that which has previously won their intellectual fealty. The poems :

“THE THREE PREACHERS

“THERE are three preachers, ever preaching,
Fill'd with eloquence and power :—
One is old with locks of white,
Skinny as an anchorite ;
And he preaches every hour
With a shrill fanatic voice,

Appendix

And a bigot's fiery scorn:—
'*Backward!* ye presumptuous nations;
Man to misery is born!
Born to drudge, and sweat, and suffer—
Born to labour and to pray;
Backward! ye presumptuous nations—
Back!—be humble and obey!'

“The second is a milder preacher;
Soft he talks as if he sung;
Sleek and slothful is his look,
And his words, as from a book,
Issue glibly from his tongue.
With an air of self-content,
High he lifts his fair white hands:—
'*Stand ye still!* ye restless nations;
And be happy, all ye lands!
Fate is law, and law is perfect;
If ye meddle, ye will mar;
Change is rash, and ever was so;
We are happy as we are.'

“Mightier is the younger preacher,
Genius flashes from his eyes;
And the crowds who hear his voice,
Give him, while their souls rejoice,
Throbbing bosoms for replies.
Awed they listen, yet elated,
While his stirring accents fall:—
'*Forward!* ye deluded nations,
Progress is the rule of all;
Man was made for healthful effort;
Tyranny has crushed him long;
He shall march from good to better,
And do battle with the wrong.

“‘Standing still is childish folly,
Going backward is a crime;
None should patiently endure
Any ill that he can cure;
Onward! keep the march of Time.

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Onward! while a wrong remains
To be conquered by the right;
While Oppression lifts a finger
To affront us by his might;
While an error clouds the reason
Of the universal heart,
Or a slave awaits his freedom,
Action is the wise man's part.

“Lo! the world is rich in blessings;
Earth and Ocean, flame and wind,
Have unnumbered secrets still,
To be ransacked when you will,
For the service of mankind;
Science is a child as yet,
And her power and scope shall grow,
And her triumphs in the future
Shall diminish toil and woe;
Shall extend the bounds of pleasure
With an ever-widening ken,
And of woods and wildernesses
Make the happy homes of men.’ ”

“THE VOICE OF THE TIME

“DAY unto day utters speech—
Be wise, O ye nations! and hear
What yesterday telleth to-day,
What to-day to the morrow will preach.
A change cometh over our sphere,
And the old goeth down to decay.
A new light hath dawned on the darkness of yore,
And men shall be slaves and oppressors no more.

“Hark to the throbbing of thought,
In the breast of the wakening world;—
Over land, over sea, it hath come.
The serf that was yesterday bought,

Appendix

To-day his defiance hath hurled,
No more in his slavery dumb;
And to-morrow will break from the fetters that bind,
And lift a bold arm for the rights of mankind.

"Hark to the voice of the time!
The multitude think for themselves,
And weigh their condition, each one.
The drudge has a spirit sublime,
And whether he hammers or delves,
He reads when his labour is done;
And learns, though he groans under penury's ban,
That freedom to think is the birthright of man.

"But yesterday thought was confined;
To breathe it was peril or death,
And it sank in the breast where it rose;—
Now, free as the midsummer wind,
It sports its adventurous breath,
And round the wide universe goes;
The mist and the cloud from its pathway are curled,
And glimpses of glory illumine the world.

"The voice of opinion has grown;
'T was yesterday changeful and weak,
Like the voice of a boy ere his prime;
To-day it has taken the tone
Of an orator worthy to speak,
Who knows the demands of the time;
And to-morrow 't will sound in Oppression's cold ear
Like the trump of the seraph to startle our sphere.

"Be wise, O ye rulers of earth!
And shut not your ears to the voice,
Nor allow it to warn you in vain;
True freedom, of yesterday's birth,
Will march on its way and rejoice,
And never be conquered again.
The day has a tongue—ay, the hours utter speech—
Wise, wise will ye be, if ye learn what they teach!"

Appendix

“ NOW

“THE venerable Past is past ;
 ’T is dark, and shines not in the ray ;
 ’T was good, no doubt—’t is gone at last—
 There dawns another day.
Why should we sit where ivies creep,
And shroud ourselves in charnels deep ;
Or the world’s Yesterdays deplore,
 ’Mid crumbling ruins, mossy, hoar ?
Why should we see with dead men’s eyes,
 Looking at Was from morn to night,
When the beauteous Now, the divine To Be,
 Woo with their charms our living sight ?
Why should we hear but echoes dull,
When the world of sound so beautiful,
 Will give us music of our own ?
Why in darkness will we grope,
When the sun, in heaven’s resplendent cope,
 Shines as bright as ever it shone ?

“Abraham saw no brighter stars
 Than those which burn for thee and me.
When Homer heard the lark’s sweet song,
 Or night-bird’s lovelier melody,
They were such sounds as Shakespeare heard,
Or Chaucer, when he blessed the bird ;
Such lovely sounds as we can hear ;—
Great Plato saw the vernal year
Send forth its tender flowers and shoots,
And luscious autumn pour its fruits ;
And we can see the lilies blow,
The corn-fields wave, the rivers flow :
For us all bounties of the earth,
For us its wisdom, love, and mirth,
If we daily walk in the sight of God,
And prize the gifts He has bestowed.

“We will not dwell amid the graves,
Nor in dim twilights sit alone,

Appendix

To gaze at mouldered architraves,
Or plinths and columns overthrown ;
We will not only see the light
Through painted windows, cobwebbed o'er,
Nor know the beauty of the night,
Save by the moonbeam on the floor :
But in the presence of the sun,
Or moon, or stars, our hearts shall glow ;
We'll look at nature face to face,
And we shall *love* because we *know*.
The present needs us. Every age
Bequeaths the next, for heritage,
No lazy luxury or delight,
But strenuous labour for the right ;
For Now, the child and sire of Time,
Demands the deeds of earnest men,
To make it better than the Past,
And stretch the circle of its ken."

The general unrest of the period was well set forth in "The Fermentation," some stanzas of which are given below. The poet, as will be seen, hears above all other sounds the articulate voice of the people crying, "Give us Justice ! we are men !" In this he spoke wisely. The specter of the starving multitude demanding justice was soon to overshadow all other issues. Here are the stanzas :

" THE FERMENTATION

"LONELY sitting, deeply musing,
On a still and starry night,
Full of fancies, when my glances
Turned upon those far romances
Scattered o'er the Infinite ;
On a sudden, broke upon me
Murmurs, rumours, quick and loud,
And, half-waking, I discovered
An innumerable crowd.

Appendix

“ ‘Mid the uproar of their voices
Scarcely could I hear a word ;
There was rushing, there was crushing,
And a sound like music gushing,
And a roar like forests stirred
By a fierce wind passing o’er them ;—
And a voice came now and then,
Louder than them all, exclaiming,
‘Give us Justice ! we are men !’

“ And the longer that I listened,
More distinctly could I hear,
‘Mid the poising of the voicing,
Sounds of sorrow and rejoicing,
Utterance of Hope and Fear ;
And a clash of disputation,
And of words at random cast—
Truths and Errors intermingling,
Of the present and the past.

“ Some were shouting that Oppression
Held their consciences in thrall ;
Some were crying, ‘Men are dying,
Hunger-smit, and none supplying
Bread, the birthright of us all.’
Some exclaimed that Wealth was haughty,
Harsh and callous to the poor ;—
Others cried, the poor were vicious,
Idle, thankless, insecure.

.

“ ‘ Give us freedom for the conscience !’
‘Equal rights !’—‘Unfettered Mind !’
‘Education !’—‘Compensation !’
‘Justice for a mighty nation !’
‘Progress !’—‘Peace for all mankind !’
‘Let us labour !’—‘Give us churches !’
‘Give us Corn where’er it grow !’
These, and other cries around me
Surged incessant, loud or low.

*Appendix**

“Old opinions jarred with new ones;
New ones jostled with the old;
In such Babel, few were able
To distinguish truth from fable,
In the tale their neighbours told.
But one voice above all others
Sounded like the voice of ten,
Clear, sonorous, and persuasive :—
‘Give us Justice! we are men!’

“And I said, ‘Oh Sovereign Reason,
Sire of Peace and Liberty!
Aid forever their endeavour;—
Boldly let them still assever
All the rights they claim in thee.
Aid the mighty Fermentation
Till it purifies at last,
And the Future of the people
Is made brighter than the Past.’”

In the 'forties of the last century people had not yet ceased to wonder at the marvels of the railway and of the telegraph. The new world that science and invention have given to our age was then but dawning on the wondering eyes of man. And even then some diletante writers were crying out against those who thought that utility had aught in common with art,—even then some were worried lest the railway should stir the poetic impulses of writers. To these fearful ones Mr. Mackay addressed the following lines:

“THE RAILWAYS

“‘NO POETRY in Railways’! foolish thought
Of a dull brain, to no fine music wrought.
By mammon dazzled, though the people prize
The gold alone, yet shall we not despise
The triumphs of our time, or fail to see
Of pregnant mind the fruitful progeny
Ushering the daylight of the world's new morn.

** Appendix*

Look up, ye doubters, be no more forlorn !—
Smooth your rough brows, ye little wise ; rejoice,
Ye who despond ; and with exulting voice
Salute, ye earnest spirits of our time,
The young Improvement ripening to her prime,
Who, in the fulness of her genial youth,
Prepares the way for Liberty and Truth,
And breaks the barriers that, since earth began,
Have made mankind the enemy of man.

“Lay down your rails, ye nations, near and far—
Yoke your full trains to Steam's triumphal car ;
Link town to town ; unite in iron bands
The long-estranged and oft-embattled lands.
Peace, mild-eyed seraph—Knowledge, light divine—
Shall send their messengers by every line.
Men, joined in amity, shall wonder long
That Hate had power to lead their fathers wrong ;
Or that false Glory lured their hearts astray,
And made it virtuous and sublime to slay.

“Blessings on Science ! When the earth seemed old,
When Faith grew doting, and the Reason cold,
'T was she discovered that the world was young,
And taught a language to its lisping tongue ;
'T was she disclosed a future to its view,
And made old knowledge pale before the new.

“Blessings on Science ! In her dawning hour
Faith knit her brow, alarmed for ancient power ;
Then looked again upon her face sincere,
Held out her hand, and hailed her—Sister dear ;
And Reason, free as eagle on the wind,
Swooped o'er the fallow meadows of the mind,
And, clear of vision, saw what seed would grow
On the hill-slopes, or in the vales below ;
What in the sunny South, or nipping Nord,
And from her talons dropped it as she soared.

“Blessings on Science, and her handmaid Steam !
They make Utopia only half a dream.”

Appendix

I close the selections from Dr. Mackay's reform verse with four poems that I regard as among his best. "Eternal Justice" is especially noble, and richly deserves to live in our literature. The poems are :

"THE WATCHER ON THE TOWER

" 'WHAT dost thou see, lone watcher on the tower?
Is the day breaking? Comes the wished-for hour?
Tell us the signs, and stretch abroad thy hand
If the bright morning dawns upon the land.'

" 'The stars are clear above me, scarcely one
Has dimmed its rays in reverence to the sun;
But yet I see, on the horizon's verge,
Some fair, faint streaks, as if the light would surge.'

" 'Look forth again, O watcher on the tower—
The people wake, and languish for the hour;
Long have they dwelt in darkness, and they pine
For the full daylight which they know must shine.'

" 'I see not well—the morn is cloudy still.—
There is a radiance on the distant hill;
Even as I watch, the glory seems to grow;
But the stars blink, and the night breezes blow.'

" 'And is that all, O watcher on the tower?
Look forth again; it must be near the hour.
Dost thou not see the snowy mountain-copes,
And the green woods beneath them on the slopes?'

" 'A mist envelopes them; I cannot trace
Their outline; but the day comes on apace.
The clouds roll up in gold and amber flakes,
And all the stars grow dim. The morning breaks.'

Appendix

“‘Again—again—O watcher on the tower!
We thirst for daylight, and we bide the hour,
Patient, but longing. Tell us, shall it be
A bright, calm, glorious daylight for the free?’

“‘I hope, but cannot tell. I hear a song,
Vivid as day itself, and clear and strong,
As of a lark—young prophet of the noon—
Pouring in sunlight his seraphic tune.’

“‘What doth he say, O watcher on the tower?
Is he a prophet? Doth the dawning hour
Inspire his music? Is his chant sublime,
Filled with the glories of the Future time?’

“‘He prophecies;—his heart is full;—his lay
Tells of the brightness of a peaceful day;
A day not cloudless, nor devoid of storm,
But sunny for the most, and clear and warm.’

“‘We thank thee, watcher on the lonely tower,
For all thou tellest. Sings he of an hour
When Error shall decay, and Truth grow strong,
And Right shall rule supreme and vanquish Wrong?’

“‘He sings of brotherhood, and joy, and peace,
Of days when jealousies and hate shall cease;
When war shall die, and man’s progressive mind
Soar as unfettered as its God designed.’

“‘Well done! thou watcher on the lonely tower!
Is the day breaking? Dawns the happy hour?
We pine to see it:—tell us, yet again,
If the broad daylight breaks upon the plain?’

“‘It breaks—it comes—the misty shadows fly;—
A rosy radiance gleams upon the sky;
The mountain-tops reflect it calm and clear;
The plain is yet in shade, but day is near.’”

Appendix

"CLEAR THE WAY

"MEN of thought ! be up and stirring,
Night and day ;
Sow the seed—withdraw the curtain—
Clear the way !
Men of action, aid and cheer them,
As ye may !
There 's a fount about to stream,
There 's a light about to beam,
There 's a warmth about to glow,
There 's a flower about to blow ;
There 's a midnight blackness changing
Into grey ;
Men of thought and men of action,
Clear the way !

"Once the welcome light has broken,
Who shall say
What the unimagined glories
Of the day ?
What the evils that shall perish
In its ray ?
Aid the dawning, tongue and pen ;
Aid it, hopes of honest men ;
Aid it, paper—aid it, type—
Aid it, for the hour is ripe,
And our earnest must not slacken
Into play.
Men of thought and men of action,
Clear the way !

"Lo ! a cloud 's about to vanish
From the day ;
And the brazen wrong to crumble
Into clay.
Lo ! the right 's about to conquer,
Clear the way !
With the Right shall many more

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Enter smiling at the door;
With the giant Wrong shall fall
Many others, great and small,
That for ages long have held us
For their prey.
Men of thought and men of action,
Clear the way!

“THE GOOD TIME COMING

“THERE’s a good time coming, boys,
A good time coming;
We may not live to see the day,
But earth shall glisten in the ray
Of the good time coming.
Cannon-balls may aid the truth,
But thought’s a weapon stronger;
We’ll win our battle by its aid ;—
Wait a little longer.

“There’s a good time coming, boys,
A good time coming ;
The pen shall supersede the sword,
And Right, not Might, shall be the lord
In the good time coming.
Worth, not Birth, shall rule mankind,
And be acknowledged stronger ;
The proper impulse has been given ;—
Wait a little longer.

“There’s a good time coming, boys,
A good time coming ;
Hateful rivalries of creed
Shall not make their martyrs bleed
In the good time coming.
Religion shall be shorn of pride,
And flourish all the stronger ;
And Charity shall trim her lamp ;—
Wait a little longer.

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“There’s a good time coming, boys,
A good time coming ;
Little children shall not toil,
In the good time coming ;
But shall play in healthful fields
Till limbs and mind grow stronger ;
And everyone shall read and write ;—
Wait a little longer.

“There’s a good time coming, boys,
A good time coming ;
The people shall be temperate,
And shall love instead of hate,
In the good time coming.
They shall use and not abuse,
And make all virtue stronger.
The reformation has begun ;—
Wait a little longer.

“There’s a good time coming, boys,
A good time coming ;
Let us aid it all we can,
Every woman, every man,
The good time coming.
Smallest helps, if rightly given,
Make the impulse stronger ;
’T will be strong enough one day ;—
Wait a little longer.”

“ETERNAL JUSTICE

“THE man is thought a knave, or fool,
Or bigot, plotting crime,
Who, for the advancement of his kind,
Is wiser than his time.
For him the hemlock shall distil ;
For him the axe be bared ;
For him the gibbet shall be built ;
For him the stake prepared.

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Him shall the scorn and wrath of men
Pursue with deadly aim ;
And malice, envy, spite, and lies
Shall desecrate his name.
But Truth shall conquer at the last,
For round and round we run ;
And ever the Right comes uppermost,
And ever is Justice done.

“ Pace through thy cell, old Socrates,
Cheerily to and fro ;
Trust to the impulse of thy soul,
And let the poison flow.
They may shatter to earth the lamp of clay
That holds a light divine,
But they cannot quench the fire of thought
By any such deadly wine.
They cannot blot thy spoken words
From the memory of man
By all the poison ever was brewed
Since time its course began.
To-day abhorred, to-morrow adored,
For round and round we run,
And ever the Truth comes uppermost,
And ever is Justice done.

“ Plod in thy cave, grey anchorite ;
Be wiser than thy peers ;
Augment the range of human power,
And trust to coming years.
They may call thee wizard, and monk accursed,
And load thee with dispraise ;
Thou wert born five hundred years too soon
For the comfort of thy days ;
But not too soon for human kind.
Time hath reward in store ;
And the demons of our sires become
The saints that we adore.
The blind can see, the slave is lord,
So round and round we run ;
And ever the Wrong is proved to be wrong,
And ever is Justice done.

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“Keep, Galileo, to thy thought,
And nerve thy soul to bear;
They may gloat o’er the senseless words they wring
From the pangs of thy despair;
They may veil their eyes, but they cannot hide
The sun’s meridian glow;
The heel of a priest may tread thee down,
And a tyrant work thee woe;
But never a truth has been destroyed;
They may curse it and call it crime;
Pervert and betray, or slander and slay,
Its teachers for a time;
But the sunshine aye shall light the sky,
As round and round we run;
And the Truth shall ever come uppermost,
And Justice shall be done.

“And live there now such men as these—
With thoughts like the great of old?
Many have died in their misery,
And left their thought untold;
And many live, and are ranked as mad,
And are placed in the cold world’s ban,
For sending their bright, far-seeing souls
Three centuries in the van.
They toil in penury and grief,
Unknown, if not maligned;
Forlorn, forlorn, hearing the scorn
Of the meanest of mankind!
But yet the world goes round and round,
And the genial seasons run;
And ever the Truth comes uppermost,
And ever is Justice done.”

We come now to the poems of the youngest of the poet-agitators of this period, in my judgment the greatest of them all—Gerald Massey. This poet, it must be remembered, was a Chartist; and he belonged to the revolutionary faction. He had suffered terribly from biting poverty; he was young; he had imbibed the spirit of revolt that was then everywhere rampant.

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In the following poems entitled "The Earth for All," "The Lords of Land and Money," "A Cry of the Unemployed," and "Our Fathers are Praying for Pauper-Pay," the rights of the people and their just contentions are boldly touched upon. It will be observed that the poet insists upon the right of all to the enjoyment of earth's bounty. The great contention of the single-taxers is emphasized by Mr. Massey, who held, no less strenuously than do the modern reformers, that the Creator made the land for all his children instead of for a favored few.

"THE EARTH FOR ALL

"Thus saith the Lord: You weary me
With prayers, and waste your own short years;
Eternal Truth you cannot see,
Who weep, and shed your sight in tears!
In vain you wait and watch the skies,
No better fortune thus will fall;
Up from your knees I bid you rise,
And claim the Earth for All.

"They ate up Earth, and promised you
The Heaven of an empty shell!
'T was theirs to say; 't was yours to do,
On pain of everlasting Hell!
They rob and leave you helplessly
For help of Heaven to cry and call;
Heaven did not make your misery,—
The Earth was given for All!

"Behold in bonds your Mother Earth;
The rich man's prostitute and slave!
Your Mother Earth, that gave you birth,
You only *own* her for a grave!
And will you die like Slaves, and see
Your Mother left a fettered thrall?
Nay! live like Men and set her free
As Heritage for All."

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But the lords of the land are not the only "masters of the bread" : the lords of money also, or those who enjoy special privileges in the medium of exchange, hold the wealth-creators in their iron grip. Massey presents the situation thus :

"THE LORDS OF LAND AND MONEY

"LIFT up your faces from the sod ;
Frown with each furrowed brow ;
Gold apes a mightier power than God,
And wealth is worshipped now !
In all these toil-ennobled lands
You have no heritage ;
They snatch the fruit of Youthful hands,
The staff from weary Age.
O tell them in their Palaces,
These Lords of Land and Money—
They shall not kill the Poor like Bees,
To rob them of Life's honey !

"Through long, dark years of blood and tears,
We've toiled like branded Slaves,
Till Wrong's red hand hath made a land
Of Paupers, Prisons, Graves !
But our long-sufferance endeth now ;
Within the souls of men
The fruitful buds of promise blow,
And Freedom lives again !
O tell them in their Palaces,
These Lords of Land and Money—
They shall not kill the Poor like Bees,
To rob them of Life's honey !

"Too long have Labour's Nobles knelt
Before factitious 'Rank' ;
Within our souls the iron is felt—
In tune our fetters clank !
A glorious voice goes throbbing forth
From millions stirring now,

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Who yet before these Gods of Earth
Shall stand with lifted brow,
And tell them in their Palaces,
These Lords of Land and Money—
They shall not kill the Poor like Bees,
To rob them of Life's honey !”

To be a tenant at the will of a landlord, or a wealth-creator at the whim of a master who (no matter how faithfully you may serve him) may see fit to turn you off at a moment's notice if you vote against what he deems his interest, or speak your convictions and they happen to run counter to his, is hard ; because, disguise it as we may, it is slavery. But there are even more tragic phases of the question than that : after you have been turned from home or employment, come the bitter days known only to the “out-of-works.” They are thus graphically described by Massey :

“A CRY OF THE UNEMPLOYED

“‘T IS HARD to be a wanderer through this bright world of ours,
Beneath a sky of smiling blue, on fragrant paths of flowers ;
With music in the woods, as there were naught but pleasure
known,
Or Angels walked Earth's solitudes, and yet with want to groan ;
To see no beauty in the stars, nor in Earth's welcome smile,
To wander cursed with misery ! willing, but cannot toil.
With burning sickness at my heart, I sink down famished :
God of the Wretched, hear my prayer : I would that I were
dead !

“Heaven droppeth down with manna still in many a golden
shower,
And feeds the leaves with fragrant breath, with silver dew the
flower.
Honey and fruit for Bee and Bird, with bloom laughs out the
tree,
And food for all God's happy things ; but none gives food to me.

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Earth, wearing plenty for a crown, smiles on my aching eye,
The purse-proud,—swathed in luxury,—disdainful pass me by;
I've willing hands, an eager heart—but may not work for bread!
God of the Wretched, hear my prayer: I would that I were
dead!

“Gold, art thou not a blessed thing, a charm above all other,
To shut up hearts to Nature's cry, when brother pleads with
brother?
Hast thou a music sweeter than the voice of loving-kindness?
No! curse thee, thou 'rt a mist 'twixt God and men in outer
blindness.
‘Father, come back!’ my Children cry; their voices, once so sweet,
Now pierce and quiver in my heart! I cannot, dare not meet
The looks that make the brain go mad, for dear ones asking
bread—
God of the Wretched, hear my prayer: I would that I were
dead!

“Lord! what right have the poor to wed? Love's for the gilded
great:
Are they not formed of nobler clay, who dine off golden plate?
'T is the worst curse of Poverty to have a feeling heart:
Why can I not, with iron grasp, choke out the tender part?
I cannot slave in yon Bastille! I think 't were bitterer pain,
To wear the Pauper's iron within, than drag the Convict's chain.
I'd work but cannot, starve I may, but will not beg for bread:
God of the Wretched, hear my prayer: I would that I were
dead!”

There are scenes so tragic that the heart sickens when contemplating them,—scenes which fill the noble mind of the poet with nameless horror, and make it cease to be a safe and sober counselor; and, like the prophet of old, the aroused singer turns in wrath upon the slow-thinking multitude who witness the old man's fruitless prayer for “pauper-pay,” the slow and terrible starvation of the old women, the virtual serfdom of the young men who create the bulk of the nation's wealth, and, more terrible than all, the enforced and revolting

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prostitution of the maidens. It is with this supreme tragedy before his eyes that we find Mr. Massey pouring forth words that are well calculated to startle alike the well-fed rich and the slow-thinking poor :

"OUR FATHERS ARE PRAYING FOR PAUPER-PAY

"SMITTEN stones will talk with fiery tongues,
And the worm, when trodden, will turn ;
But, Cowards, ye cringe to the cruellest wrongs,
And answer with never a spurn.
Then torture, O Tyrants, the spiritless drove,
Old England's Helots will bear ;
There's no hell in their hatred, no God in their love,
No shame in their deepest despair.
For our Fathers are praying for Pauper-pay,
And our Mothers with Death's kiss are white ;
Our Sons are the rich man's Serfs by day,
And our Daughters his Slaves by night.

"The Tearless are drunk with our tears ; have they driven
The God of the poor man mad ?
For we weary of waiting the help of Heaven,
And the battle goes still with the bad.
O but death for death, and life for life,
It were better to take and give,
With hand to throat, and with knife to knife,
Than die out as thousands live !
Our Fathers are praying for Pauper-pay,
And our Mothers with Death's kiss are white ;
Our Sons are the rich man's Serfs by day,
And our Daughters his Slaves by night.

"Fearless and few were the Heroes of old,
Who played the peerless part ;
We are fifty-fold, but the gangrene Gold
Is eating out England's heart.

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With their faces to danger, like Freemen they fought,
With their daring, all heart and hand;
And the thunder-deed followed the lightning-thought,
When they stood for their own good land.
Our Fathers are praying for Pauper-pay,
And our Mothers with Death's kiss are white;
Our Sons are the rich man's Serfs by day,
And our Daughters his Slaves by night.

"When the heart of one-half the world doth beat
Akin to the brave and the true,
And the tramp of Democracy's earth-quaking feet
Goes thrilling the wide world through,—
We should not be crouching in darkness and dust,
And dying like slaves in the night;
But big with the might of the inward '*must*,'
We should battle for Freedom and Right!
Our Fathers are praying for Pauper-pay,
And our Mothers with Death's kiss are white;
Our Sons are the rich man's Serfs by day,
And our Daughters his Slaves by night.

"What do we lack, that the Ruffian Wrong
Should starve us 'mid heaps of gold?
We have brains as broad, we have arms as strong
As our captors, if only as bold!
Will a thousand years more of meek suffering school
Your lives to a sterner bravery?
No! down and down with their Robber Rule,
And up from the land of slavery!
Our Fathers are praying for Pauper-pay,
And our Mothers with Death's kiss are white;
Our Sons are the rich man's Serfs by day,
And our Daughters his Slaves by night."

Given monopoly in *land*, monopoly in *money*, monopoly in the *commodities of life*, and the phenomenon of the unemployed, what is essentially the vassalage of the toiler, and the gradual despoilment and degradation of manhood and of womanhood become inevitable. In this group of poems we find the cardinal aspects of present-day

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affairs, no less than the wrongs of the 'forties of the last century, vividly presented.

Massey is not content, however, with merely drawing vivid pictures. In the poem "Anathema Maranatha," he passes from the statement of the more tragic side of social conditions to an appeal to the manhood of the masses:

"LOVE is the Crown of all life, but ye wear it not ;
Freedom, Humanity's palm, and ye bear it not ;
Beauty spreads banquet for all, but ye share it not ;
Grimmer the blinding veil glooms, and ye tear it not.
Weaving your life-flowers in Wealth's robe of glory,
Ye stint in your starkness with youth smitten hoary !"

In his poem "Onward and Sunward," Massey thus exhorts the people:

"THE mightiest souls of all time hover o'er us,
Who laboured like Gods among men, and have gone
With great bursts of sun on the dark way before us ;
They're with us, still with us, our battle fight on,
Looking down victor-browed, from the glory-crowned hill,
They beckon and beacon us on, onward still ;
And the true heart's aspirings are onward, still onward ;
It turns to the Future, as earth turneth Sunward."

Somewhat the same note of exultant brutality as in Kipling's "The Galley Slave" mingles with the freedom-call in this splendid—

"SONG OF THE RED REPUBLICAN

"FLING out the red Banner! its fiery front under,
Come, gather ye, gather ye, Champions of Right!
And roll round the world, with the voice of God's thunder,
The Wrongs we've to reckon, Oppressions to smite.
They deem that we strike no more like the old Hero-band,
Victory's own battle-hearted and brave:
Once more, brothers mine, it were sweet but to see ye stand,
Triumph or Tomb welcome, Glory or Grave!

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“Fling out the red Banner! in mountain and valley
Let Earth feel the tread of the Free once again;
Now soldiers of Liberty make one more rally,
Old Earth yearns to know that her children are Men.
We are nerved by a thousand wrongs, burning and bleeding;
Bold Thoughts leap to birth, but the bold Deeds must come;
And wherever Humanity’s yearning and pleading,
One battle for Liberty strike we heart-home.

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“Fling out the red Banner, O Sons of the morning!
Young spirits awaiting to burst into wings,—
We stand shadow-crowned, but sublime is the warning,
All heaven’s grimly hushed, and the Bird of Storm sings!
‘All’s well,’ saith the Sentry on Tyranny’s tower,
While Hope by his watch-fire is grey and tear-blind;
Ay, all’s well! Freedom’s Altar burns, hour by hour,
Live brands for the fire-damp with which ye are mined.

“Fling out the red Banner! the Patriots perish,
But where their bones whiten the seed striketh root;
Their blood hath run red the great harvest to cherish:
Now gather ye, Reapers, and garner the fruit.
Victory! victory! Tyrants are quaking!
The Titan of Toil from the bloody thrall starts;
The Slaves are awaking, the dawn-light is breaking,
The foot-fall of Freedom beats quick at our hearts!”

Here are inspiring words:

“THE AWAKENING

“How SWEET is the fair face of Nature, when May,
With her rainbow earth-born and flower-woven, hath spanned
Hill and dale; and the music of birds on the spray
Makes Earth seem a beautiful faëry land!
And dear is our First-love’s young spirit-wed Bride,
With her meek eyes just sheathing in tender eclipse,

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When the sound of our voice calls her heart's ruddy tide
Up in beauty to break on her cheek and her lips.
But Earth hath no sight half so glorious to see,
As a People up-girding its might to be free.

"To see men awake from the slumber of ages,
Their brows grim from labour, their hands hard and tan,
Start up living Heroes, long-dreamt-of by Sages!
And smite with strong arm the Oppressors of man;
To see them come dauntless forth 'mid the world's warring,
Slaves of the midnight-mine! Serfs of the sod!
Shew how the Eternal within them is stirring,
And nevermore bend to a crownéd clod:
Dear God! 't is a sight for Immortals to see,—
A People up-girding its might to be free.

"Battle on bravely, O sons of Humanity!
Dash down the Cup from your lips, O ye Toilers!
Too long hath the world bled for Tyrants' insanity—
Too long our weakness been strength to our Spoilers!
The heart that through danger and death will be dutiful;
Soul that with Cranmer in fire would shake hands,
And a life like a Palace-home built for the beautiful,
Freedom of all her beloved demands—
And Earth has no sight half so glorious to see,
As a People up-girding its might to be free!"

The notice of Mr. Massey's contributions to the spiritual ferment of his time may well end with these beautiful lines, which should be graven on the hearts of all:

"TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

"THOUGH hearts brood o'er the Past, our eyes
With smiling Futures glisten;
For, lo! our Day bursts up the skies!
Lean out your souls and listen!

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The world is rolling Freedom's way,
And ripening with her sorrow;
Take heart! who bear the Cross To-day
Shall wear the Crown To-morrow.

"O Youth! flame-earnest, still aspire,
With energies immortal!
To many a heaven of Desire
Our yearning opes a portal.
And though Age wearies by the way,
And hearts break in the furrow,
Youth sows the golden grain To-day,—
The Harvest comes To-morrow.

"Build up heroic lives, and all
Be like a sheathen sabre,
Ready to flash out at God's call,
O Chivalry of Labour!
Triumph and Toil are twins, though they
Be singly born in Sorrow;
And 't is the Martyrdom To-day
Brings Victory To-morrow."

I close this section with two poems of Charles Kingsley. "Alton Locke's Song" shows how profoundly this brave and noble-minded Church of England clergyman was moved by the wretchedness revealed to him in the stifling dens of London, as well as among the agrarian population. "The Day of the Lord" is a prophet-cry; like "Alton Locke's Song," it rings with the spirit of Chartism rather than that of the League. The two poems may be said to utter the spirit of 1848.

"ALTON LOCKE'S SONG"

"WEEP, weep, weep and weep,
For pauper, dolt, and slave!
Hark! from wasted moor and fen,
Feverous alley, stifling den,
Swell the wail of Saxon men—
Work! or the grave!

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"Down, down, down and down
With idler, knave, and tyrant !
Why for sluggards cark and moil ?
He that will not live by toil
Has no right on English soil !
God's word 's our warrant !

"Up, up, up and up !
Face your game and play it !
The night is past, behold the sun !
The idols fall, the lie is done !
The Judge is set, the doom begun !
Who shall stay it ? "

"THE DAY OF THE LORD

"THE Day of the Lord is at hand, at hand ;
Its storms roll up the sky ;
The nations sleep starving on heaps of gold ;
All dreamers toss and sigh ;
The night is darkest before the morn ;
When the pain is sorest the child is born,
And the Day of the Lord is at hand.

"Gather you, gather you, angels of God—
Freedom, and Mercy, and Truth ;
Come ! for the Earth is grown coward and old,
Come down, and renew us her youth.
Wisdom, Self-Sacrifice, Daring, and Love,
Haste to the battle-field, stoop from above,
To the Day of the Lord at hand.

"Gather you, gather you, hounds of hell—
Famine, and Plague, and War ;
Idleness, Bigotry, Cant, and Misrule,
Gather, and fall in the snare !
Hireling and Mammonite, Bigot and Knave,
Crawl to the battle-field, sneak to your grave,
In the Day of the Lord at hand.

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“Who would sit down and sigh for a lost age of gold,
While the Lord of all ages is here?
True hearts will leap up at the trumpet of God,
And those who can suffer, can dare.
Each old age of gold was an iron age too,
And the meekest of saints may find stern work to do,
In the Day of the Lord at hand.”

II. DR. CHARLES MACKAY'S POLITICAL FABLE OF THE TAILOR-RULED LAND

I HAVE elsewhere referred to the part played by poems, songs, stories, brief arguments, Socratic discussions, and political fables in the educational campaign that resulted in the repeal of the Corn Laws and the establishment of Free Trade in England. As an interesting illustration of one kind of weapon used by the reformers to reach the mind of the slow-thinking thousands, I give the following political fable written by Dr. Charles Mackay. In his delightful volume of reminiscences the author says: "Once, in the course of a conversation with Mr. Cobden I remarked, that as good an argument could be made in justification of a legislative and parliamentary monopoly of tailors and shoemakers, as for that of agriculturists. 'Quite as good,' replied Mr. Cobden; 'you should work the idea out. It might form a political fable, and be the means of driving an idea into heads that might not otherwise be converted to the true faith.'" *

This conversation led the young journalist to prepare a little fable, which was so good an example of the tracts and leaflets that proved highly effective in the educational work of the League that I reproduce it in full. It was first read at the weekly meeting of the League, next published in the *Morning Chronicle* and was afterwards utilized in the propaganda work.

"THE TAILOR-RULED LAND

"In a certain powerful and populous country there was a great peculiarity in the mode of government. That peculiarity was, that no man could sit in either House of Parliament, of which, as in ours,

* Mackay's "Forty Years' Recollections," vol. I., p. 129.

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there were two, who was not a *tailor*. To be a tailor doing a great stroke of business was to be eligible not only for a seat in the Legislature, but for all the principal offices of State; and in fact the law was so framed that if any man of talent, not a tailor, was anxious to procure admission into Parliament, he was compelled to do his conscience wrong and hire a tailor's shop for a day, that he might swear at the moment of his election that he did really and truly belong to that eminent fraternity.

"The consequences of this state of things may be easily anticipated. People, seeing that the tailors made the law, looked up to the tailors with becoming respect; and the monarchs of the country, being in the power of the tailors from generation to generation, conferred honours, dignities, and emoluments upon them. The tailors, having so much power and consideration, naturally endeavoured to turn both to their own advantage, and made a law enacting that coats and breeches, and every species of attire, should not be sold under a certain large price. They also enacted other laws for the protection and sole advantage of tailors. But these were felt as nothing by them compared with the cruelty of making all sorts of garments excessively and unnecessarily dear; great portions of the community, unable to pay this price, and prevented by law from sending to the tailors of other countries, who had no such powers and privileges, were obliged to wear very coarse and insufficient raiment; and many went without it altogether, and perished from the inclemency of the weather. The tailors, however, did not care what sufferings the multitudes experienced for the want of covering; how many old men and old women shivered in the wintry blasts; and how many little children were nipped in the bud of existence, who might have lived to old age if clothes had been as cheap and as easily to be procured as they ought to have been. The tailors accused those who complained of such evils as men of no knowledge of the true principles of Government—as men of no rectitude—who wished to overturn the monarchy, bring about a revolution, destroy religion, and render us dependent upon foreign nations for our breeches. They refused loudly to lower the price of their commodities, and maintained, with many specious arguments, that had it not been for the great price of coats and other garments, the nation would not have attained any rank or eminence among the powers of the earth, and would have been conquered and overrun by the people of neighbouring states. These false and ridiculous doctrines were so widely spread, and so zealously inculcated by the tailors, and by people connected with them, that many well-meaning men were convinced that the tailors spoke the truth, and paid willingly the extortionate sums

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demanding by them. The cry of the naked multitudes was heard occasionally ; but when the weather grew warmer it was hushed, and the tailors fancied it was not the warm weather, but their arguments, that had stilled the multitude, and consoled themselves during the hot and quiet days with the hope that all opposition had died away.

“In these times there arose a man by the name of Eel—a very fair-spoken, intelligent man—who, though not born among the tailors, had bought himself into their fraternity by his wealth, and acquired great ascendancy amongst them by his plausible character. This man Eel had great tact, undoubted prudence, and a sort of plain, business-like eloquence that had great weight with all the mediocre minds who did not like the labour of thinking for themselves, and who were very well satisfied that so respectable a person should think for them. Now Eel had the misfortune of connecting himself early in life with the tailors, in consequence of the facilities afforded by their corporation of advancing his ambitious views of power and influence over his fellow-men ; and although the older he grew, the more sensible he became that the tailors had not acted justly to the community, and had by their selfishness inflicted many evils upon the nation, he had not the courage to renounce his allegiance to them. Now, the nature of the man was acute, or more properly speaking, cunning ; and when the tailors chose him for their leader, there arose a great struggle in his mind upon the coat and breeches question. The more he thought upon the matter, and the more he listened to the voice of reason, justice, and common sense, the more convinced he became that the tailors were wrong and that the people were right. He was, to do him justice, anxious enough that the monopoly of the tailors should be brought to an end, and that the people should be cheaply clothed ; but at the same time he was anxious not to vex his friends, who had brought him into so responsible a position, nor to destroy the great party of the tailors out of the country.

“In this perplexity a scheme was devised, that when the thermometer was ten degrees below freezing point, the poor people might send for clothes to neighbouring states, and not be obliged to buy from the high-priced tailors of their own country. This scheme, however, was not found to work well ; for when the shivering people sent for their clothes, the thermometer not unfrequently rose to twenty or thirty degrees above the freezing point before the order could be executed ; and when at last the clothes came, they were refused admission into the country unless such duty were paid upon them as made them as dear as the home manufacture. This scheme, therefore, did not work,

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and great agitation sprung up from one end of the country to the other against the tailors.

"At last a League was formed, the object of which was to put the tailors upon the same level with shoemakers and other artisans, and with the farmers and owners of land, and generally all those who were concerned in the growth of the people's food. The tailors, seeing this, endeavoured to raise an outcry against the League. They accused them of selfish and interested views; and if there happened to be a shoemaker, or stocking-weaver, or landlord among them, raised a great hubbub, called them mercenaries and lovers of mammon—reckless and unprincipled men, who cared not for the throne or the altar provided breeches were cheap—though what connection there was between the price of breeches and the throne, they never properly explained. It is not to be supposed that in Parliament, where their influence was strong, they could be kept silent; and Eel, who knew very well that they could not open their mouths without betraying the weakness of their cause, endeavoured to amuse them with other subjects of discussion. They *would* speak, however, and from time to time uttered such absurdities, especially one man of the name of Goodwood, and another of the name of Stowe, that people, miserable as they were for want of clothes, could not avoid laughing at the ridiculous things which these two uttered with all the pompousness of truth and sincerity. Thus the matter remained for two or three years—Eel all the while becoming in his heart more and more estranged from the tailors; but hesitating with an excess of caution which was characteristic of him to do that which he knew to be right, lest the tailors should be too rudely thrown down from the bad pre-eminence they so long occupied."

III. CHARTIST PETITION PRESENTED TO THE COMMONS IN 1839

BELOW is a copy of the great petition presented by the Chartists and introduced by Mr. Attwood, June 14, 1839. It contained 1,200,000 signatures. In 1842 a petition containing several million signatures was presented. Both, however, shared the same fate of being summarily rejected.

FIRST NATIONAL PETITION OF THE UNITED CHARTISTS

"To the Honourable the Commons of Great Britain and Ireland, in Parliament assembled, the Petition of the undersigned, their suffering countrymen,

"HUMBLY SHEWETH,—

"That we, your petitioners, dwell in a land whose merchants are noted for their enterprise, whose manufacturers are very skilful, and whose workmen are proverbial for their industry. The land itself is goodly, the soil rich, and the temperature wholesome. It is abundantly furnished with the materials of commerce and trade. It has numerous and convenient harbours. In facility of internal communication it exceeds all others. For three and twenty years we have enjoyed a profound peace. Yet, with all the elements of national prosperity, and with every disposition and capacity to take advantage of them, we find ourselves overwhelmed with public and private suffering. We are bowed down under a load of taxes, which, notwithstanding, fall greatly short of the wants of our rulers. Our traders are trembling on the verge of bankruptcy; our workmen are starving. Capital brings no profit, and labour no remuneration. The home of the artificer is desolate, and the warehouse of the pawnbroker is full. The workhouse is crowded, and the manufactory is deserted. We have looked on every side; we have searched diligently in order

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to find out the causes of distress so sore and so long continued. We can discover none in nature or in Providence. Heaven has dealt graciously by the people, nor have the people abused its grace, but the foolishness of our rulers has made the goodness of God of none effect. The energies of a mighty kingdom have been wasted in building up the power of selfish and ignorant men, and its resources squandered for their aggrandisement. The good of a part has been advanced at the sacrifice of the good of the nation. The few have governed for the interest of the few, while the interests of the many have been sotishly neglected, or insolently and tyrannously trampled upon. It was the fond expectation of the friends of the people that a remedy for the greater part, if not for the whole of their grievances, would be found in the Reform Act of 1832. They regarded that Act as a wise means to a worthy end, as the machinery of an improved legislation, where the will of the masses would be at length potential. They have been bitterly and basely deceived. The fruit which looked so fair to the eye, has turned to dust and ashes when gathered. The Reform Act has effected a transfer of power from one domineering faction to another, and left the people as helpless as before. Our slavery has been exchanged for an apprenticeship to liberty, which has aggravated the painful feelings of our social degradation, by adding to them the sickening of still deferred hope. We come before your honourable house to tell you, with all humility, that this state of things must not be permitted to continue. That it cannot long continue, without very seriously endangering the stability of the throne, and the peace of the kingdom, and that if, by God's help, and all lawful and constitutional appliances, an end can be put to it, we are fully resolved that it shall speedily come to an end. We tell your honourable house, that the capital of the master must no longer be deprived of its due profit; that the labour of the workman must no longer be deprived of its due reward. That the laws which make food dear, and the laws which make money scarce, must be abolished. That taxation must be made to fall on property, not on industry. That the good of the many, as it is the only legitimate end, so must it be the sole study of the government. As a preliminary essential to these and other requisite changes—as the means by which alone the interests of the people can be effectually vindicated and secured—we demand that those interests be confided to the keeping of the people. When the State calls for defenders, when it calls for money, no consideration of poverty or ignorance can be pleaded in refusal or delay of the call. Required, as we are universally, to support and obey the laws, nature and reason entitle us to demand that in the making of the laws the universal voice

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shall be implicitly listened to. We perform the duties of freemen ; we must have the privileges of freemen. Therefore, we demand universal suffrage. The suffrage, to be exempt from the corruption of the wealthy and the violence of the powerful, must be secret. The assertion of our right necessarily involves the power of its uncontrolled exercise. We ask for the reality of a good, not for its semblance, therefore we demand the ballot. The connection between the representatives and the people, to be beneficial, must be intimate. The legislative and constituent powers, for correction and for instruction, ought to be brought into frequent contact. Errors which are comparatively light, when susceptible of a speedy popular remedy, may produce the most disastrous effects when permitted to grow inveterate through years of compulsory endurance. To public safety, as well as public confidence, frequent elections are essential. Therefore, we demand annual parliaments. With power to choose, and freedom in choosing, the range of our choice must be unrestricted. We are compelled, by the existing laws, to take for our representatives men who are incapable of appreciating our difficulties, or have little sympathy with them ; merchants who have retired from trade and no longer feel its harassings ; proprietors of land who are alike ignorant of its evils and its cure ; lawyers by whom the notoriety of the senate is courted only as a means of obtaining notice in the courts. The labours of a representative who is sedulous in the discharge of his duty are numerous and burdensome. It is neither just, nor reasonable, nor safe, that they should continue to be gratuitously rendered. We demand that in the future election of members of your honourable house, the approbation of the constituency shall be the sole qualification, and that to every representative so chosen shall be assigned out of the public taxes, a fair and adequate remuneration for the time which he is called upon to devote to the public service. The management of this mighty kingdom has hitherto been a subject for contending factions to try their selfish experiments upon. We have felt the consequences in our sorrowful experience : short glimmerings of uncertain enjoyment, swallowed up by long and dark seasons of suffering. If the self-government of the people should not remove their distresses, it will, at least, remove their repinings. Universal suffrage will, and it alone can, bring true and lasting peace to the nation ; we firmly believe that it will also bring prosperity. May it therefore please your honourable house, to take this our petition into your most serious consideration, and to use your utmost endeavours, by all constitutional means, to have a law passed, granting to every male of lawful age, sane mind, and unconvicted of crime, the right of voting for members of Parliament,

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and directing all future elections of members of Parliament to be in the way of secret ballot, and ordaining that the duration of Parliament, so chosen, shall in no case exceed one year, and abolishing all property qualifications in the members, and providing for their due remuneration while in attendance on their parliamentary duties.

“And your petitioners shall ever pray.”

THE END



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